The Meadow-Brook Girls Series

The Meadow-Brook Girls By The Sea

Janet Aldridge

Merry Xmas 1918
Frances
from
Mother & Father

The Sea Lay Sparkling in the Sunlight.

Frontispiece.

Carolyn Nelson

The Meadow-Brook Girls by the Sea

OR

The Loss of The Lonesome Bar

By

JANET ALDRIDGE

Author of the Meadow-Brook Girls Under Canvas, The Meadow-Brook Girls Across Country, The Meadow-Brook Girls Afloat, The Meadow-Brook Girls in The Hills, The Meadow-Brook Girls on The Tennis Courts

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The Meadow-Brook Girls by the Sea

CHAPTER I

A DELIGHTFUL MYSTERY

"I THINK we are ready to start, girls." Miss Elting folded the road map that she had been studying and placed it in a pocket of her long dust coat. There was a half-smile on her face, a merry twinkle in her eyes.

"Which way do I drive?" questioned Jane McCarthy.

"Straight ahead out of the village," answered Miss Elting, the guardian of the party of young girls who were embarking on their summer's vacation under somewhat unusual circumstances.

"It's the first time I ever started for a place without knowing what the place was, or where I was going," declared Jane McCarthy, otherwise known as "Crazy Jane."

"Won't you pleathe tell uth where we are going?" lisped Grace Thompson.

Miss Elting shook her head, with decision.

"Do my father and mother know where we are going?" persisted Grace.

"Of course they know, Tommy. The parents of each of you know, and I know, and so shall you after you reach your destination. Have you everything in the car, Jane?"

"Everything but myself," nodded Jane. The latter's automobile, well loaded with camping equipment, stood awaiting its passengers. The latter were Miss Elting, Jane McCarthy, Harriet Burrell, Grace Thompson, Hazel Holland and Margery Brown, the party being otherwise known as "The Meadow-Brook Girls." "Get in, girls. We'll shake the dust of Meadow-Brook from our tires before you can count twenty," continued Jane. "If Crazy Jane were to drive through the town slowly folks surely would think something startling had happened to her. Is there anything you wish to do before we leave, Miss Elting?"

"Not that I think of at the moment, Jane."

"Oh, let's say good-bye to our folks," suggested Margery Brown.

"I have thaid good-bye," answered Grace with finality.

"We'll give them a farewell blast," chuckled Jane. With that she climbed into the car, and, with a honk of the horn, drove down that street and into the next, keeping the horn going almost

continually. As they passed the home of each girl the young women gave the yell of the Meadow-Brook Girls:

"Rah, rah, rah,
Rah, rah, rah!
Meadow-Brook, Meadow-Brook,
Sis, boom, ah!"

It was shouted in chorus at their homes, and as the car passed the homes of their friends as well. Hands were waved from windows, hats were swung in the air by boy friends, while the older people smiled indulgently and nodded to them as the rapidly moving motor car passed through the village.

"I think the town knows all about it now. Suppose we make a start?" suggested Miss Elting.

"We haven't therenaded the poththmathter yet," Tommy reminded her.

"Nor the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker," answered Harriet Burrell laughingly. "How long a drive have we, Miss Elting?"

"Four or five hours, ordinarily. Jane undoubtedly will make it in much less time, if she drives at her usual rate of speed. Straight south, Jane. I will tell you when to change."

The faces of the girls wore a puzzled expression. They could not imagine where they were going. Miss Elting had made a mystery of this summer vacation, and not a word had the girls been able to obtain from her as to where they were to go: whether to tour the country in Crazy Jane's automobile, or to go into camp. Tommy declared that it was a perfectly delightful mythtery, and that she didn't care where they were going, while Margery on the contrary, grumbled incessantly.

The start had been made late in the afternoon. The day had been cloudy. There were even indications of rain, but the girls did not care. They were too well inured to the weather to be disturbed by lowering skies and threatening clouds. In the meantime Jane McCarthy was bowling along to the southward, throwing up a cloud of dust, having many narrow escapes from collisions with farmers' wagons and wandering stock. They had been traveling about two hours when the guardian directed their daring driver to turn to the left. The latter did so, thus heading the car to the eastward.

"I think I begin to understand," thought Harriet Burrell aloud.

"What ith it that you underthtand?" demanded Tommy, pricking up her ears. "You know where we are going, don't you?"

"I can make a close guess," replied Harriet, nodding brightly.

"Oh, tell uth, tell uth," begged Tommy.

Harriet shook her head.

"I couldn't think of it. Miss Elting wishes it to be a surprise to you."

"Well, won't it be jutht ath much of a thurprithe now ath it will be thome other time?" argued Grace Thompson.

"Perhaps Harriet just imagines she knows. I do not believe she knows any more about our destination than do the rest of our party," said the guardian. "But why worry about it? You will know when you get there."

Jane stopped the car, and, getting out, proceeded to put the curtains up on one side, Harriet and Hazel doing the same on the opposite side. The storm curtain, with its square of transparent isinglass, was next set in place to protect the driver from the front, the wind shield first having been turned down out of the way.

"Now let the rain come," chuckled Jane, after having taken a quick survey of their work.

"Yes; it is nice and cosy in here," answered Miss Elting. "I almost believe I should like to sleep in here during a rainstorm."

"Excuthe me," objected Tommy. "I'd be thure to get crampth in my neck."

"She would that," answered Jane laughingly,

starting the car and a moment later throwing in the high-speed clutch.

The party was not more than fairly started on the way again when the raindrops began pattering on the leather top of the car.

"There it comes," cried Jane McCarthy. "Sounds like rain on a tin roof, doesn't it?"

The downpour rapidly grew heavier, accompanied by lightning and thunder. The flashes were blinding, dazzling Jane's eyes so that she had difficulty in keeping her car in the road. It was now nearly evening, and an early darkness had already settled over the landscape. There was little hope of more light, for night would be upon them by the time the storm had passed. True, there would be a moon behind the clouds, but the latter bade fair to be wholly obscured during the evening.

Despite the blinding storm that masked the road, and the sharp flashes of lightning that dazzled the eyes of the driver, Crazy Jane McCarthy went on driving ahead at the same rate of speed until Miss Elting begged her to go more slowly. Jane reduced the speed of the car, though so slightly as to be scarcely noticeable.

The guardian smiled but made no further comment. Being shut in as they were, they would have difficulty in getting out were an ac-

cident to befall them. All at once, however, Jane slowed down with a jolt. She then sent the car cautiously ahead, this time driving out on a level grass plot at the side of the road. There she shut down, turned off the power, and, leaning back, yawned audibly.

"Whoa!" she said wearily.

"Why, Jane, what is the matter?" cried Miss Elting.

"Like a sailboat, we can't make much headway without wind. As it happens, we have no wind on the quarter, as the sailors would say."

"I don't understand."

"She means the tires are down," explained Harriet Burrell.

"Yes. I told Dad those rear tires were leaking, but he declared they were good for five hundred miles yet."

"Can't we patch them?" queried Harriet.

"We can," replied Jane, "but we aren't going to until this rain lets up a little. Please don't ask me to get out and paddle about in the wet, for I'm not going to do anything of the sort." Jane began to hum a tune. Her companions settled back comfortably. It was dry and cosy in the car and the travellers felt drowsy. Jane was the only really wide-awake one. Margery finally uttered a single, loud snore that awakened the others. The girls ut-

tered a shout and began shaking Margery, who pulled herself sharply together, protesting that she hadn't been asleep for even one little minute.

"That ith the way thhe alwayth doeth," observed Tommy. "Then thhe denieth it. I'm glad I don't thnore. Ithn't it awful to thnore, Mith Elting?"

"Having too much to say is worse," answered Jane pointedly. "The storm has passed. Let's get out and fix things up. Harriet, will you help me? Miss Elting, if you will be good enough to engineer the taking-down of the side curtains and the lowering of the top I shall be obliged. We shan't need the top. We aren't going to have any more rain to-night, and I want all the light I can get, especially as we are going over strange roads. Have you been this way before?"

"No, Jane, but I have the road map."

"Road map!" scoffed the Irish girl. "I followed one once and landed in a ditch!"

"That ith nothing for Crathy Jane to do," lisped Grace.

"Right you are, Tommy," answered Jane with a hearty laugh. "Just as I thought, the tires, the inner tubes, are leaking around the valves. We shan't be able to do much with them, but I think we can make them hold until

we get in. I'll have some new inner tubes sent out to us. By the way, are we going to be where we can send for supplies and have them delivered?" questioned Jane shrewdly.

"Oh, I think so," was Miss Elting's evasive answer.

"Aren't you glad you found out?" chuckled Harriet.

Jane grinned, but said nothing. The work of patching the two inner tubes occupied nearly an hour before the tires were back in place and the car ready to start. Harriet, in the meantime, had lighted the big headlights and the rear light.

"All aboard for Nowhere!" shouted Jane. The girls again took their places in the car, which started with a jolt. "Is it straight ahead, Miss Elting?"

"Yes."

"I hope you know where you're going. I'm sure I don't," remarked Jane under her breath.

They had gone but a short distance before the driver discovered that which displeased her very much. The lights on the front of the car were growing dim. Her companions noticed this at about the same time.

"The gas is giving out," exclaimed Jane. "Isn't that provoking? With us it is one continuous round of surprises."

"What are we going to do?" questioned Margery apprehensively.

"Just the same as before: keep on going," replied the Irish girl. "I've driven without lights before this. I guess I can do it again. I can see the road and so can you."

"Please reduce your speed a little," urged Miss Elting. The driver did so, for Jane was not quite so confident of her ability to keep to the road as she would have had them believe. "There comes some one. Please stop; I want to ask him a question."

A farmer on a horse had ridden out to one side of the road, where he was holding his mount, the horse being afraid of the car. Miss Elting asked him how they might reach the Lonesome Cove. The girls were very deeply interested in this question as well as in the answer to it. They had never heard of Lonesome Cove. So that was to be their destination? They nudged each other knowingly. The farmer informed Miss Elting that the Cove was about eight miles farther on.

"Take your third right hand turn and it'll lead you right down into the Cove," he said. "It's a pretty lonesome place now," he added.

"Yes, I understand," replied the guardian hurriedly, "but we know all about that. Thank you very much. You may drive ahead now,

Jane." Jane smiled and started on. "I will keep watch of the turns of the road. You pay attention to your driving exclusively," added Miss Elting. "And, girls, you keep a sharp lookout, too."

"Where ith thith Lonethome Cove?" questioned Tommy. "I don't like the thound of the name."

"You will like it when you get there," answered the guardian. "But I said I would not tell you anything about it. Time enough when we reach there. You shall then see for yourselves. You are going too fast, Jane."

"I'd like to reach there some time before morning. The road is clear and level. I'm going only twenty miles an hour, as it is. That's just a creeping pace, you know," reassured Jane.

"Yes, I know," answered the guardian, with a shake of her head. They continued on, but without much conversation, for Jane was busy watching the road, her companions keeping a sharp lookout for the turns. They had already passed two roads that led off to the right. The next, according to their informant, would be the one for them to take to reach the Lonesome Cove.

"Here is the third turn," announced Jane finally, bringing her car to a stop. The high-

way on which they had been riding was shaded with second-growth trees, as was the intersecting road. The latter was narrow; but, from Jane's investigations, she having stepped down to examine it, it was hard though not well-traveled. "Have you been here before, Miss Elting?"

"No, Jane; I have not. Go ahead and drive carefully, for I hardly think it a main road."

"It's a good one, whether it is a main road or not."

They moved on down the side road, and, gaining confidence as they progressed, Jane McCarthy let out a notch at a time until she was traveling at a fairly high rate of speed. Their way wound in and out among the small trees and bushes that bordered the road, the latter narrowing little by little until there was barely room for turning out in case they were to meet another vehicle. However, there seemed little chance of that. The motor car appeared to be the only vehicle abroad that night.

The road now was so dark that it was only by glancing up at the tops of the bordering trees, outlined against the sky, that the driver of the car was able to keep well in the middle of it. She was straining her eyes, peering into the darkness ahead.

"How far?" demanded Jane shortly, never

removing her gaze from the trees and the roadway.

"We must be near the place. Surely it cannot be far now," answered the guardian. "I thought we should have seen a light before this."

"We're coming into the open," broke in Jane. "I'm glad of that. Now we needn't be afraid of running into the trees or the fences, if there are any along the track. I can't make out the sides of the road at all. I——"

A sudden and new sound cut short her words. The girls, realizing that something unusual was occurring, fell suddenly silent. The roadway beneath them gave off a hollow sound, as if they were going over a bridge. The fringe of trees had fallen away, while all about them was what appeared to be a darkened plain or field. Yet strain their eyes as they would, the travelers were unable to distinguish the character of their surroundings, though Harriet Burrell, with chin elevated, had been sniffing the air suspiciously.

"I smell water," she cried.

"Tho do I," lisped Tommy. "But I don't want a drink."

Jane began to slow down as soon as the new sound had been heard. The car was rolling along slowly. For some unaccountable reason the driver put on a little more speed. Then

came Jane McCarthy's voice, in a quick, warning shout:

"Here's trouble. Jump, girls! Jump! We're going in!"

They did not know what it was that they were going into, but not a girl of them obeyed Jane's command. Margery half-arose from the seat. Hazel pulled her back.

"Sit still, girls!" commanded Miss Elting. "Stop the car, Jane!"

The driver shut off and applied the brake. But she was too late. The automobile kept on going. The roadway underneath it seemed to be dropping away from them; for a few seconds they experienced the sensation of riding on thin air; then the car lurched heavily forward, and, with a mighty splash, plunged into water. A great sheet of solid water leaped up and enveloped them.

"Everyone for herself!" cried Harriet Burrell. "Jump, girls!"

This time they *did* essay to jump. Before they could do so, however, they were struggling to free themselves from the sinking car, the water already over their heads.

CHAPTER II

WHAT CAME OF A COLD PLUNGE

FIVE girls and their guardian struggled free from the sinking motor car and began paddling for the surface. All knowing how to swim, they instinctively held their breath when they felt the water closing over them. Fortunately for the Meadow-Brook Girls, the top had been removed from the car, else all would have been drowned before they could have extricated themselves. Jane had the most difficulty in getting out. She was held to her seat by the steering wheel for a few seconds, but not so much as a thought of fear entered her mind. Crazy Jane went to work methodically to free herself, which she succeeded in doing a few seconds after her companions had reached the surface.

"Thave me, oh, thave me!" wailed Tommy Thompson chokingly.

There followed a great splashing, accompanied by shouts and choking coughs. About this time Jane McCarthy's head appeared above the water. She took a long, gasping breath, then called out:

"Here we are, darlin's! Is anybody wet?"

"Girls, are you all here?" cried Miss Elting anxiously. "Call your names."

They did so, and there was relief in every heart when it was found that not a girl was missing. But they had yet to learn how they happened to be in the water. The latter was cold as ice, it seemed to them, and their desire now was to get to shore as quickly as possible. Which way the shore lay they did not know, but from the looks of the sky-line it was apparent that they would not be obliged to go far in either direction to find a landing place.

"Follow me, girls," directed the guardian. "We will get out of here and talk about our disaster afterward. Harriet, please bring up the rear. Be sure that no one is left behind."

The splashing ceased, each girl starting forward with her own particular stroke: Tommy swimming frog-fashion, Margery blowing, puffing, and groaning, paddling like a four-footed animal.

"Oh, help!" she moaned.

"I'm glad I'm not tho fat ath you are," observed Tommy to the puffing Margery.

"That will do, Tommy! Buster is quite as well able to take care of herself as are you. I've touched bottom! Here we are, girls. Oh, I am so glad!"

"Where ith it? I can't thee the bottom."

"Stop swimming, and you'll feel it," suggested Jane, who, having reached the shore, waded out of the water and ran, laughing, up the bank. "My stars, what a mess!"

One by one the others emerged from the cold water and stood shivering on the beach.

"Wring out your clothes," directed Miss Elting. This, some of them were already doing. Margery sat down helplessly. Harriet assisted her to her feet.

"You mustn't do that. You surely will catch cold. Keep moving, dear," ordered Harriet.

"I can't. My clothes weigh a ton," protested Margery.

"Buthter thinkth it ith her clotheth that are heavy," jeered Tommy. "It ithn't your clotheth, Buthter; it'th you."

"Make her stop, Miss Elting. Don't you think I am suffering enough, without Tommy making me feel any worse?"

"Yes, I do. Tommy, will you please stop annoying Margery?"

"Yeth, Mith Elting, I'll thtop until Buthter getth dry again. But I'm jutht ath wet at thhe ith, and I'm not croth."

"Girls, we have had a very narrow escape. I dread to think what would have happened had that automobile top been up. We should give thanks for our deliverance. But I don't under-

stand how we came to get in there, or what it is that we did get into," said the guardian.

"I know. It wath water," Tommy informed her. "It wath wet water, too, and cold water, and——"

A shivering chorus of laughs greeted her words. Some of the girls began whipping their arms and jumping up and down, for all were very cold.

"Can't we run?" asked Harriet.

"Yes, if we can decide where the water is, and where it isn't," replied Miss Elting. "Suppose we find the road? We can run up and down that without danger of falling in."

"It is just to the left of us; I can see the opening between the trees," answered Harriet. She moved in the direction she had indicated. "Here it is. Come on, girls."

The others picked their way cautiously to her. Harriet started up the road at a run, followed by the others and accompanied by the "plush, plush, plush!" of shoes nearly full of water. Tommy sat down.

"What are you doing on the ground?" shrieked Margery, as she stumbled and fell over her little companion. "Why don't you tell me when you are going to sit down, so that I won't fall over you?"

"You wouldn't, if you weren't tho fat."

"Tommy!" broke in Miss Elting. The whole party had come to a halt, following Margery's mishap.

"I beg your pardon, Mith Elting. I forgot. Buthter ithn't dry yet. What am I doing? Yeth, I'm bailing out my thhoeth. Ugh! How they do thtick to my feet. Oh, I can't get them on again!" wailed Tommy.

"What a helpless creature you are," answered Harriet laughingly. "Here, let me help you. There. You see how easy it is when once you make up your mind that you really can."

"No, I don't thee. It ith too dark. Help me up!"

"Take hold of my hand. Here, Margery, you get on the other side. We three will run together. Everyone else keep out of our way."

"Yeth, becauthe Buthter ith——" Tommy, remembering her promise, checked herself. The three started up the road at a brisk trot. Reaching the main road, Harriet led them about, then began running back toward the water.

"Look out for the water," warned Jane shrilly, after they had been going for a few minutes. But her warning came too late. Harriet, Tommy and Margery had turned to the right after reaching the open. The three fell in with a splash and a chorus of screams. The water was shallow and there was no difficulty in get-

ting out, but the girls now were as wet as before, and shivering more than ever. At this juncture the guardian took a hand. She directed them to walk up and down the road in orderly fashion, which they did, shivering, their teeth chattering and the water dripping from their clothing. Reaching the main highway the guardian turned out on this, walking her charges a full mile in the direction they had been following before turning off into the by-way.

"This part of the country appears to be deserted," she said. "I think we had better return. In the morning we will try to find some one."

"Thave me!" moaned Tommy. "Mutht we thtay here in our wet clotheth all night?"

"I fear so. What else is there for us to do?"

"But let uth get our dry clotheth and put them on," urged Tommy The girls laughed at her.

"Our clothes are down under the water in the car, darlin'," Jane informed her.

"Of course, they are soaked," reflected Miss Elting.

"I do not think so. The chest on the back of the car is water-proof as well as dust-proof," said Jane. "If it weren't water-proof the things in it would get soaked every time there was a driving rainstorm. No; our other clothing is as

dry as toast. You'll see that it is when we get it."

"Yes, when we do," groaned Margery—"*when* we do!"

"It might as well be wet," observed the guardian. "We shan't be able to get it out. Do you think the car is ruined, Jane?"

"It's wet, like ourselves, Miss Elting. I reckon it will take a whole summer to dry it out thoroughly. I've got to get word to Dad to come after it."

"What will he say when he learns of the accident, Jane?" questioned Harriet.

"Say? He will say it served the old car right for being such a fool. My dad has common sense. He will have another car up here for us just as soon as he can get one here. By the way, Miss Elting, how much farther do we have to go?"

"I don't know, Jane. I hope it isn't much farther. How far do you think we traveled after meeting the man?"

"Five miles, I should say."

"And he told us that the third turn-off would lead us to Lonesome Cove, did he not?"

"He did, but he made a mistake. This is Wet Cove."

"And a lonesome one, too, even if it isn't *the* Lonesome one," chuckled Harriet.

"Then we cannot be so very far from our destination. I am sure this isn't the place. We haven't come far enough. Why didn't we think of that before we turned into this road?"

"If I knew where you wanted to go, I might be better able to answer that question," reminded Jane. But the guardian was not to be caught in Crazy Jane's trap, though it was too dark to reveal the quizzical smile that wrinkled Miss Elting's face.

"I am not sure that I know myself, Jane," was her reply.

"You fully expected to find some one here, did you not?" teased Harriet. "I might say that you looked to find a number of persons here?"

"We won't discuss that now. Do you wish to spoil the little surprise that I have been planning for you?"

"If this is your surprise, I don't think much of it," declared Jane bluntly.

"Nor can I blame you," agreed Miss Elting. "But this is not the surprise."

"Maybe if we wait we will fall into thome more pondth," suggested Grace. "Ith your thurprithe ath wet at thith one wath?"

"I admit your right to tease me, Tommy," laughed the guardian.

"Come on, everybody!" urged Harriet. "We must walk briskly and keep it up. That will

be the only way to keep us from catching cold as a result of our wetting." Having paused for a moment to discuss their situation the girls began tramping once more. As the hours dragged along all became weary and drowsy. Their joints were growing stiff, too, which condition was not improved by the chill of the night air. Most active of all the party was little Tommy Thompson, who skipped along, talking incessantly. Margery was scarcely able to keep up with the party. Twice she leaned against a tree, closing her eyes, only to fall to the ground in a heap. Harriet, though nearly as tired and footsore as her companions, summoned all her will power and trudged bravely along.

Had the Meadow-Brook Girls not been so well seasoned to hardship, serious results might have followed their unexpected bath in the chill waters, followed by their exposure to the searching night wind. But they were healthy, outdoor girls, as all our readers know. The first volume of this series, "The Meadow-Brook Girls Under Canvas," told the story of their first vacation spent in the open, when, as members of Camp Wau-Wau in the Pocono Woods, they served their novitiate as Camp Girls, winning many honors and becoming firmly wedded to life in the woods.

When that camping period came to an end Harriet and her companions, as related in "The Meadow-Brook Girls Across Country," set out on the long walk home, meeting with plenty of adventures and many laughable happenings. It was during this hike that they became acquainted with the Tramp Club Boys and entered into a walking contest against them, which the Meadow-Brook Girls won.

Our readers next met the girls in "The Meadow-Brook Girls Afloat," a volume which contained the account of their houseboat life on Lake Winnepesaukee. It was there that they again outwitted the Tramp Club, who took their defeat good-naturedly and by way of retaliation aided the girls in running down a mysterious enemy whose malicious mischief had caused them repeated annoyance.

Then, as their summer was not yet ended, the Meadow-Brook Girls accepted an invitation from Jane McCarthy to accompany her on a trip through the White Mountains, all of which is fully set forth in "The Meadow-Brook Girls in the Hills."

It was there that they met with a series of mishaps which they laid at the door of an ill-favored man who had vainly tried to become their guide. The disappearance of Janus Grubb, the guide who had been engaged by Miss

Elting during their mountain hike, and the surprising events that followed made the story of their mountain trip well worth reading.

And now, once more, we find the Meadow-Brook Girls ready to take the trail again wherever that trail might lead. At the present moment, however, it did not look as though Harriet Burrell and her friends would reach their destination in the immediate future unless it were nearer at hand than they thought.

Not once during the night did the moon show her face, though about two o'clock in the morning the clouds thinned, the landscape showing with more distinctness. The girls, when they walked down to the shore, saw a sheet of water covering several acres. Leading down to the water was a pier that extended far out into the little lake or pond, whatever it might be. Harriet, Jane and Miss Elting walked out to the far end of the pier.

Harriet pointed to the end of the pier as she stood above it. "It has broken down," she said.

"No; I think not," answered the guardian. "I think, too, that I understand what this is. It is an ice pier. Ice is harvested from this pond and carried up over that sloping platform and so on to the shore or to conveyances waiting here. But how narrow it is. How ever did you

manage to keep on the pier until you reached the end, Jane, dear?"

"I really don't know, Miss Elting," replied Jane, evidently impressed with the feat she had accomplished. She leaned over and peered into the water to see if she could find her car. It was not to be seen. Dark objects, floating here and there about the surface, showed the girls where part of their equipment had gone. Harriet was regarding the dark objects with inquiring eyes.

"I wish we had a boat," said Miss Elting. "We could gather up our stuff. We can't afford to lose it."

"We don't need a boat. Jane and I will get it out. What do you say, Jane?" answered Harriet.

"I don't know what you have in mind, darlin', but I'm with you, whatever it is."

"You and I will go in after the things."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Jane. "And in this cold water. Br-rr-r!"

"No; you must not do that," objected the guardian. "At least not now."

"What is it you folks are planning?" questioned Hazel, who, with Tommy and Buster, had joined the party at the end of the pier. Jane explained what Harriet had proposed. Margery's teeth began to chatter again.

"My—my weak heart won't stand any more," she groaned. "Don't ask me to go into that horrid, cold water again. *Please* don't!"

"You won't feel the cold once you are in," urged Harriet.

"No. I didn't feel it the other time, did I?"

"What? Go in thwimming," demanded Tommy. "I wouldn't go in that water again for a dollar and fifty thentth; no, not for a dollar and theventy-five thentth." Tommy began backing away, as though fearing the others might insist and assist her in. Suddenly she uttered a scream.

"Thave me!" yelled Tommy.

They saw her lurch backward; her feet left the pier; then came a splash. Tommy Thompson had gone over backward and taken to the water head first.

CHAPTER III

HARRIET HAS A NARROW ESCAPE

"THAVE me! Oh, thave me!"

Tommy had turned over and righted herself before rising to the surface. When she did appear she was within a foot or so of the pier. Her little blonde head popped up from under the water all of a sudden,

and in that instant she opened her mouth in a wail for help. Tommy's companions were fairly hysterical with merriment. Tommy yelled again, begging them to "thave" her.

"I'll save ye, darlin'," cried Jane, throwing herself down and fastening a hand lightly in Tommy's hair, whereat the little girl screamed more lustily than before. "Lend a hand here, my hearties. The darlin' wants to be saved. We'll save her, won't we?" Jane shouted in great glee.

"Of course we will," answered Harriet. She leaned over the edge of the pier, Jane raising the little girl until the latter's shoulders were above water; Harriet got hold of her dress and worked her hand along until she had grasped Tommy by the ankles.

"Let go!" yelled Tommy.

She meant for Harriet to release her feet, but instead Jane McCarthy released her hold on Tommy's shoulders. The next second Tommy Thompson was standing on her head in the pond with Harriet Burrell jouncing her up and down, trying to get her out of the water, but taking more time about it, so it seemed, than was really necessary. Every time Tommy's head was drawn free of the water she uttered a choking yell. There was no telling how long the nonsense might have continued, had not Miss El-

ting thrust Harriet aside, resulting in Tommy's falling into the water and having to be rescued again. Tommy was weeping when finally they dragged her to the pier and wrung the water out of her clothing.

"Now, don't you wish you were *fat?*" jeered Margery. "If you had been, they couldn't have lifted you and you wouldn't have fallen in again."

"Fat like you? Never! I'd die firtht," replied Tommy. "But I may ath it ith. I'm freething, Mith Elting."

"Get up and go ashore. Hazel, will you please see that Grace doesn't sit down on the cold ground?"

Hazel Holland led the protesting Tommy along the pier to the shore, where she walked the little girl up and down as fast as she could be induced to move, which, after all, was not much faster than an ordinarily slow walk. The others of the party remained out at the end, walking back and forth and waiting until the coming of the dawn, so that they might see to that for which they had planned by daylight.

At the first suggestion of dawn, Harriet plunged into the pond without a word of warning to her companions and began gathering up and pushing bundles of equipment toward the shore. Jane and Hazel were not far behind

her. Then Miss Elting, not to be outdone by her charges, plunged in after them. Margery, shivering, turned her back on them and walked shoreward.

" 'Fraid cat! 'fraid cat!" taunted Tommy, when she saw Margery coming.

"I'm no more afraid than you are. You're afraid to go into the water. The only way you can go in is to fall in or be pushed!"

"Am I? Ith that tho? Well, I'll thhow you whether I am afraid of the water. I dare you to follow me." Tommy fairly flew down the pier; then, leaping up into the air, jumped far out, taking a clean feet-first dive into the pond, uttering a shrill little yell just before disappearing under the surface. But all at once she stood up, and, by raising her chin a little, was able to keep her head above water.

"Hello there, Tommy, what are you standing on?" called Harriet, puffing and blowing as she pushed a canvas-bound pack along ahead of her.

"I don't know. I gueth it mutht be the automobile top. It ith nithe and thpringy."

"Please stay there until I get back. I wish to look it over. If you can, I wish you would find the rear end of the car, so I may locate it exactly."

"What have you in mind, darlin'?" asked Jane, with a quick glance at Harriet.

"I'm going to try to get our clothes. The trunk is strapped and buckled to the rear end, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Tell me just how those buckles are placed; whether there is also a loop through which the strap has been run, and all about it."

"How should I know?"

"You put the trunk on, didn't you?"

"Surely, but I can't remember all those things, even if I ever knew them."

"Jane, you should learn to observe more closely. Most persons are careless about that." Harriet began swimming toward the shore with Jane.

"Thay! How long mutht I thtand here in the wet up to my prethiouth neck?" demanded Grace Thompson. Her feet seemed to be very light. They persisted in either rising or drifting away from the submerged automobile top. Tommy kept her hands moving slowly to assist in maintaining her equilibrium.

"Wait until I return, if you will, please," answered Harriet.

"Thave me! I can't wait. Here I go *now!*" She slipped off and went under, but came up sputtering and protesting. Instead of remaining to mark the sunken car, Tommy swam rapidly to shore. She found Harriet, Hazel and

Jane sitting with feet hanging over the pier talking to Miss Elting. The four were dripping, but none of them seemed to mind this. The sun soon would be up, and its rays would dry their clothing and bring them warmth for the first time since their disaster of the night before.

"Do be careful," Miss Elting was saying when Tommy swam up, and, clinging to the pier with one hand, floated listlessly while listening to what was being said.

"What's the matter, Tommy? Couldn't you stand it any longer?" asked Harriet.

"My feet got tho light that I couldn't hang on."

"She means her head instead of her feet," corrected Margery.

"I think I had better go after the trunk now," decided Harriet.

"I wish you would let me go with you," urged Jane.

"No; two of us would be in each other's way. You folks had better stay here and wait. There will be plenty to do after I get the trunk ashore, provided I do. We must have all our outfit together by sunrise, for we have a day's work ahead of us. Want to get up, Tommy?"

"Yeth."

Harriet reached down and assisted Grace,

dripping, to the pier. Then she slipped in and swam in a leisurely way to the sunken automobile, which she located after swimming about for a few moments. The next thing to do was to find the rear end of the car. This was quickly accomplished. Harriet took a long breath, then dived swiftly. It seemed to her companions that she had been gone a long time, when, finally, the girl's dark head rose dripping from the pond. She shook her head, took several long breaths, then dived again.

Three times Harriet Burrell repeated this. At last, after a brief dive, they saw the black trunk leap free to the surface of the pond. The Meadow-Brook Girls uttered a yell. Harriet had accomplished a task that would have proved to be too much for the average man. Down there, underneath the water, crouching under the backward tilting automobile on the bottom of the pond, she had unbuckled three stubborn straps, rising to the surface after unbuckling each strap, taking in a new supply of delicious fresh air, then returning to her task.

Before the Meadow-Brook Girls had finished with their shouting, cheering and gleeful dancing, the black luggage had drifted some distance from the spot where it had first appeared. So delighted were they with the result of Harriet Burrell's efforts that, for the moment, the

others entirely forgot the girl herself. But all at once Miss Elting came to a realization of the truth. Something was wrong.

"Harriet!" she cried excitedly. It was unusual for the guardian to show alarm, even though she might feel it. "Where is Harriet?"

The shouting and the cheering ceased instantly.

"Oh, she's just playing a trick on us," scoffed Margery Brown.

Suddenly the keen eyes of Jane McCarthy caught sight of something that sent her heart leaping. That something was a series of bubbles that rose to the surface. Jane gazed wide-eyed, neither moving nor speaking, then suddenly hurled herself into the pond. Two loud splashes followed her own dive into the water. Tommy and Miss Elting were plunging ahead with all speed. Jane was the first to reach the scene. She dived, came up empty-handed, then dived again. Tommy essayed to make a dive, but did not get in deep enough to fully cover her back. Miss Elting made an error in her calculations, as Jane had done on the first dive, missing the sunken automobile by several feet.

Now Hazel sprang into the water and swam to them as fast as she knew how to propel herself. Jane shot out of the water and waved both arms frantically above her head.

"Spread out!" she cried in a strained, frightened voice.

"Did—didn't you find her?" gasped Miss Elting.

"No."

Jane was gone again, leaving a wake that reached all the way to the beach, so violent had been her floundering dive.

Tommy, who had raised her head from the water a short distance from where the guardian was paddling, uttered a scream.

"There thhe ith!" she cried; "there she ith! Right down there. Come in a hurry. She ith under the car. I could thee her plainly. Oh, I'm tho thcared!" Tommy began paddling for the shore with all speed.

Miss Elting did not answer. Instead, she took a long dive. About this time Jane came up. Hazel, who was making for the spot where the guardian had disappeared, pointed to it. Jane understood. It took her but a few seconds to reach the center of the rippling circle left by the guardian; then Crazy Jane's feet kicked the air a couple of times. She had taken an almost perpendicular dive. But it seemed that she had not been under water more than a second or two when she lunged to the surface. A few feet from her Miss Elting appeared, threw herself over on her back and lay gasping for breath.

"She'th got her!" screamed Tommy. "Harriet ith dead!"

Gazing out over the pond she saw Jane swimming swiftly toward shore, dragging the apparently lifeless body of Harriet Burrell. Miss Elting and Hazel were closing up on Jane rapidly. Reaching her side a moment later, the guardian took one of Harriet's arms and assisted in towing her in.

Tommy remembered afterward having been fascinated by the expressions in their faces. She stared and stared. The faces of the two women were white and haggard. Still farther back she saw only Hazel's eyes. They were so large that Tommy was scarcely able to credit their belonging to Hazel. Had Tommy known it, her own face was more pale and haggard at that moment than those of her companions.

Jane dragged Harriet ashore; then Miss Elting grasped the unconscious girl almost roughly, flung her over on her stomach and began applying "first aid to the drowned."

"Ith—ith she dead?" gasped Tommy.

"She's drowned, darlin'," answered Crazy Jane McCarthy abruptly.

CHAPTER IV

A QUESTION OF POLITICS

"LAY her over on her back!"

Jane obeyed Miss Elting's command promptly. The guardian, using her wet handkerchief, cleared Harriet's mouth by keeping the tongue down to admit the air.

"Work her arms back and forth. We must set up artificial respiration," she directed.

Jane, without any apparent excitement, began a steady movement of the patient's arms, bringing them together above the head, then down to the sides. She continued this as steadily as if she were not face to face with a great tragedy. She did not yet know whether or not it were a tragedy; but, if appearances went for anything, it was. In the meantime the guardian had glanced over her shoulder at the pond. She saw the trunk slowly drifting in.

"Get it and open it, Hazel," she commanded.

"I haven't a key."

"Break it open with a stone. Never mind a key."

Hazel ran out into the water until she was up to her neck, then she swam out. Reaching the floating trunk, she got behind it and began push-

ing it shoreward. Margery and Tommy stood watching the proceedings in speechless horror. Hazel got the trunk ashore, when, following the guardian's directions, she broke the lock open with a stone.

"It's open," she cried.

"Are the things inside very wet?"

"No; they are just as dry as they can be."

"Good. Are Harriet's clothes there?"

"I think so. Shall I take them out?"

"Not just yet. I will tell you if they are needed."

Hazel understood what was in the mind of the guardian. Were Harriet Burrell not to recover, the dry clothing would not be needed. Nevertheless, Hazel piled the contents of the trunk on the ground, then replaced it, leaving Harriet's belongings at the top of the pile, so that they would be ready at hand in case of need. In the meantime Crazy Jane and Miss Elting persisted in their efforts to resuscitate the unconscious girl. Though no sign of returning life rewarded their labor, they continued without a second's halting. Half an hour had passed. That was lengthened to an hour, then suddenly Jane stopped, leaned over and peered into the pale face of Harriet.

"I see a little color returning!" she cried in a shrill voice. "Hurrah! Harriet's alive!"

"You don't thay?" exclaimed Tommy.

"Keep her arms going! Don't stop for a single second," commanded Miss Elting. "Hazel, take off Harriet's shoes. Beat the bottoms of her feet. Oh, if we had something warm to put her in. Margery, you get out Harriet's clothing from the trunk."

"I—I can't," answered Buster in a weak voice.

"Buthter ith too nervouth. I'll get them," offered Tommy. She did, too. Now that she had something to do, she went about it as calmly as though she had had no previous fear. "Are thethe what you want, Mith Elting?" she asked.

"Yes; bring them here. She is breathing. Faster, Jane, faster!"

"Don't pull her armth out by the roootth," warned Tommy. The guardian made no reply. It was a critical moment and Harriet Burrell's life hung on a very slender thread. Return to consciousness was so slow as to seem like no recovery at all. The spot of red that had appeared in either cheek faded and disappeared. Miss Elting's heart sank when she noted the change in the face of the unconscious girl. Jane saw it, too, but made no comment.

Tommy, having taken the clothes from the trunk, now very methodically piled them up near at hand, so that the guardian might reach

them without shifting her position materially. Then the little girl stood with hands clasped before her, her eyes squinting, her face twisted into what Jane afterward said was a really hard knot.

Two tiny spots of red once more appeared in each cheek of Harriet's white face.

"Shall I move her arms faster?" asked Jane.

Miss Elting shook her head. "Keep on as you are. I don't quite understand, but she is alive. Of that I am positive."

For fully fifteen minutes after that the two young women worked in silence. They noted joyfully that the tiny spots of color in Harriet's cheeks were growing. The spots were now as large as a twenty-five-cent piece. Miss Elting motioned for Jane to cease the arm movements, then she laid an ear over Harriet's heart.

"Keep it up," she cried, straightening suddenly. "We are going to save her." Margery, who had drawn slowly near, turned abruptly, walked away and sat down heavily. Jane's under lip trembled ever so little, but she showed no other sign of emotion, and methodically continued at her work.

"Now, as soon as we can get the breath of life into her body, we must strip off those wet clothes and bundle her into something dry. We shall be taking a great chance in undressing her

in the open air, but the fact that Harriet is in such splendid condition should go a long way toward pulling her through. I wish we had a blanket to wrap her in. However, we shall have to do with what we have."

Jane kept steadily at her work, her eyes fixed on the face of the patient. She made no reply to Miss Elting's words. Tommy, however, tilted her head to one side reflectively. Then she turned it ever so little, regarding the broken trunk as if trying to make up her mind whether or not she should hold it responsible for the disaster. After a few moments of staring at the trunk she sidled over to it, and, stooping down, began rummaging through its contents. From the trunk she finally drew forth a long flannel nightgown. This she carried over and gravely spread out on the pile of clothing that she had previously placed near Miss Elting. The guardian's eyes lighted appreciatively.

"Thank you, dear. That is splendid," she said, flashing a smile at Tommy. "You are very resourceful. I am proud of you."

"You're welcome," answered Grace with a grimace. "Ith there anything elthe that I can do?"

Miss Elting shook her head. The smile had left her face; all her faculties were again centered on the work in hand. Shortly after that

the two workers were gratified to note a quiver of the eyelids of the patient. This was followed by a slight rising and falling of the chest, and a few moments later Harriet Burrell opened her eyes, closed them wearily and turned over on her face. Crazy Jane promptly turned her on her back, and none too gently at that.

"Plea—se let me alone. I'm all right," murmured Harriet.

"Help me carry her out yonder under the trees," ordered the guardian. "There will be less breeze there."

"I'll carry her, Miss Elting." Jane picked Harriet up, and, throwing the girl over her shoulder, staggered off into the bushes with her burden. Harriet was heavy, but Jane McCarthy's fine strength was equal to her task. Miss Elting had gathered up the clothing and followed. Tommy started to accompany her, but the guardian motioned her back.

"Jane and I will attend to her," she said. Tommy pouted and strolled over to Margery.

"Is—is Harriet going to die?" wailed Margery.

"No, Buthter, she ithn't."

Margery turned anxiously away. By the time the guardian reached the spot where Jane had put Harriet down, the latter had fully recovered consciousness; but she was shivering, her lips

were blue and her face gray and haggard except for the two faint spots of color that had first indicated her return to consciousness.

"Hold her up while I strip off her waist," commanded Miss Elting. Harriet protested that she was able to stand alone, but just the same Jane supported her. It was the work of but a few moments to strip off the cold, wet garments and put on dry ones, including the flannel nightgown.

"Let me lie down a little while," begged Harriet weakly.

"No; you must walk. Jane, will you keep her going?"

"That I will. Come to me, darlin'."

Harriet got to her feet with the assistance of her companion. Jane then began walking her slowly about. The color gradually returned to the face of the Meadow-Brook Girl, the gray pallor giving place to a more healthy glow. She wanted to talk, but Miss Elting said she was not to do so for the present. Now, Tommy and Margery followed her about, though without speaking. This walking was continued for the better part of an hour. In the meantime Miss Elting was considering what might best be done. She decided to go in search of some one who would take them to their destination. After a talk with Harriet, and leaving directions as to

what was to be done during her absence, the guardian set out, walking fast. She realized the necessity of warm drinks and something to assist in stirring Harriet's circulation. The Meadow-Brook Girl's escape from drowning had been a narrow one, but no one realized the necessity for further treatment more than Miss Elting did.

After a time Harriet insisted on walking without the support of Jane's arm, but it was a difficult undertaking. Harriet had to bring all the resolution she possessed to the task of supporting her weakened limbs; but she managed it, with now and then a rest, leaning against a tree or a rock. Tommy had found her tongue again, to keep up a running fire of inconsequential chatter that served its purpose well, assisting Harriet in keeping her mind from her own troubles.

The guardian returned, after having been absent half an hour. She came running down the byway, shouting before she appeared in sight of the party to know if all were well.

"Oh, Harriet, I'm so glad to see you looking better! I have a boy and a democrat wagon to take us to the real cove. This isn't the place at all. Lonesome Cove is nearly five miles from here. But look! I've something that will please you!" exclaimed the guardian.

"What ith it?" demanded Tommy, edging near.

"Coffee!" exclaimed Miss Elting triumphantly.

"But how are we going to cook it?" cried Jane.

"Get the coffee pot. It is in one of the packs that we saved. We have neither milk nor sugar, but we shan't care about that. I met a boy, as I have told you. He had been to mill with a grist, and was also taking some groceries home with him. I secured the coffee by paying double price for it, but consider it cheap at that. Hazel, you and Margery will gather some dry wood and make a fire." Jane already had gone to look for the coffee pot. She found it, after opening one of the wet packs.

"The fire is laid," announced Hazel, "but we haven't any matches. What shall we do?"

"Mith Elting hath thome matcheth," answered Tommy.

"How do you know, my dear?" The guardian laughed merrily.

"I thee a box in your pocket."

"You see too much," declared Margery.

"Yes, I bought matches, too." Miss Elting herself applied a match to the sticks that had been laid for the cook fire. "Harriet, come right here by the fire and warm yourself."

"Where is the boy?" asked Harriet.

"He will be along in a few minutes. I ran all the way back. He will drive in and wait until we are ready. I promised him two dollars if he would take us to our destination."

"Does he know where it is?" questioned Jane.

"He says he does, but——" The guardian flushed and checked herself abruptly. "I nearly gave my surprise away."

Jane had the water boiling in a few minutes, then quickly made the coffee. A cup was handed to Harriet. She drank it steaming hot.

"Oh, that tastes good!" she breathed.

"You can feel it all the way down, can't you?" questioned Tommy solemnly.

"Yes, I can."

"Drink another one, dear," urged the guardian; "it won't keep you awake. Perhaps, now that you feel better, you will tell us how you came so near drowning?"

"I did nearly drown, didn't I?"

"You did, as thoroughly as one could and yet live to tell of it," replied Miss Elting, her voice husky.

"I had unfastened all the straps save the third one," began Harriet. "By that time the trunk was standing on end. It was very buoyant. The idea never occurred to me that there

was any danger from the trunk. I was too much concerned wondering if I shouldn't have to open my mouth, for my lungs were nearly bursting. Well, I gave the last strap a jerk and I think the buckle must have pulled off, for the end of the trunk flew up and hit me on the head."

"But how did you get wedged under the car springs?" interrupted the guardian. "I found you there."

"I don't know. I don't remember anything that occurred after I was hit by the trunk until I began to realize that some one was working over me, and that I wished to be let alone. I was so comfortable that I did not wish to be disturbed."

"Thave me!" exclaimed Tommy.

"How long did you work over me?"

"More than an hour," replied Miss Elting.

"Then I really was just about drowned, was I not?" questioned Harriet, her eyes growing large.

"You were."

Harriet Burrell pondered a moment, then lifted a pair of serious brown eyes to her companions.

"I am glad I had the experience," she said, "but I am sorry I made so much trouble. I feel all right now, and strong enough for almost anything. When do we start for the Cove?"

"At once. I hear the boy coming. Do you think you are really ready?"

"I know I am. But I believe I will have another cup of coffee before we start. Did we rescue all of our equipment?"

"Some of it has been lost, but that doesn't matter so long as we have you safe and sound. Yes, there is the boy. Hoo-e-e-e!" called the guardian.

"Ye-o-o-w!" answered the boy promptly. They saw him turn into the byway. The horse he was driving was so thin that every rib stood out plainly. The democrat wagon was all squeaks and groans, its wheels being so crooked that the girls thought they were going to come off.

"You must help us to get our things aboard," said Miss Elting. "Will your wagon hold them all?"

"If it doesn't break down," was the reply.

"Well, some of us can walk."

The boy backed his rickety wagon down near where the belongings of the Meadow-Brook Girls lay in a tumbled heap. Jane assisted him in loading the equipment, amazing the country boy by her strength and quickness.

"You going to camp, eh?" he questioned.

"We don't know what we are going to do," replied Jane. "We're likely to do almost any-

thing that happens to enter our minds as well as some things that don't enter our minds. Stow that package under the seat forward; yes, that way. There. Do you think of anything else, Miss Elting?"

"Nothing except the automobile. I hardly think we shall be able to take that with us."

"Indeed, no," answered Jane with a broad grin. "We'll let Dad do that. Who is going to ride?"

"Let's see. Harriet, of course——"

"I can walk," protested Harriet.

"No; you will ride. Margery and Tommy also may ride. Hazel, Jane and I will walk. It will do us good, for we need exercise this morning, though I must say that a little breakfast would not come amiss."

"You thay that ith a Democrat wagon?" questioned Tommy.

"Yes, dear. Why do you ask?" answered Miss Elting smilingly.

"I jutht wanted to know. I'll walk, thank you, Mith Elting. You thay it ith a Democrat wagon?"

"Yes, yes. What of it?"

"I wouldn't ride in a Democrat wagon. My father would dithown me if I did! If it wath a Republican wagon, now, it would be all right—but a Democrat wagon—thave me!"

CHAPTER V

THE ROCKY ROAD TO WAU-WAU

"YOU surely are a loyal little Republican, Tommy. Whether we agree with you in politics or not, we must respect your loyalty. However, I think you had better get up and ride," urged Miss Elting.

Tommy shook her head, regarding the democrat wagon with a disapproving squint. Jane assisted Harriet up over the front wheel, Margery climbed in on the other side, the boy "pushed on the reins," and the procession moved slowly toward the main road, with Miss Elting, Jane, Hazel and Tommy trudging on ahead. Harriet rode only a short distance before she grew weary of it, and, dropping to the ground, ran on and joined her companions.

"I shall have nervous prostration if I ride in that wagon," she said. "Every minute expecting it to collapse isn't any too good for one who has just been drowned, and whose nerves are on edge."

"Promise me that you will not overtax your strength; that if you feel yourself getting weary you *will* get in and ride," answered the guardian, looking anxiously at Harriet.

"I promise," was Harriet's laughing rejoinder.

The sun by this time was high in the heavens and was blazing down on them hotly. The warmth felt good, especially to those who still wore the clothes in which they had spent so much time in the cold water of the pond. To Harriet it was a grateful relief from the chill that had followed her accident. Tommy permitted herself to lag behind, and the moment she was out of ear-shot of her companions she began to quiz the country boy to learn where he was taking them.

"Lonesome Cove," he replied.

"Where ith that?"

"On the shore."

"On what thhore?"

"The sea shore."

"Oh! Tho we are going to the thea thhore? I thee," reflected Tommy wisely. "Are there lotth of people there?"

"Isn't nobody there. It's just sea shore, that's all."

Tommy chuckled and nodded to herself as she increased her pace and joined her party.

"When we get to camp I'm going to take a bath in the thea," she announced carelessly. Miss Elting regarded her sharply.

"Camp? Sea?" questioned the guardian.

"Yeth. I thaid 'camp' and 'thea.' "

"Where do you think you are going, Grace?"

"Why, to the thea thhore of courthe. But there ithn't anybody there."

"Tommy, you've been spying. I am amazed at you."

"No, I haven't been doing anything of the thort. It ith true, ithn't it?"

"I shall not tell you a single thing. You are trying to quiz me. That isn't fair, my dear."

Tommy chuckled and joined Harriet, linking an arm with her and starting a lively conversation. Harriet, instead of growing weary, appeared to be getting stronger with the moments. Her step was more and more springy, and her face had resumed its usual healthy color, but this was the longest five miles she remembered to have traveled. The others felt much the same. It must be remembered that they had had neither supper nor breakfast, except for the cup of coffee that they had taken before starting out on their tramp. The guardian had hoped to reach her destination in time for luncheon, when she knew the girls would have a satisfying meal. However, the hour was near to one o'clock when finally the boy shouted to them.

They halted and waited for him.

"Lonesome Cove down there, 'bout a quarter

of a mile," he informed them, jerking the butt of his whip in the direction of a thin forest of spindling pines to the right of the highway. "Ocean right over there."

"I hear it," cried Harriet. "Doesn't it sound glorious?"

"We thank you. You may unload our equipment and pile it by the side of the road. We will carry it down to the beach, and again I thank you very much."

Jane and Hazel assisted in the unloading. They would permit neither Harriet nor Miss Elting to help. The boy was paid and drove away whistling. He had made a good deal, and knew very well that the folks at home would find no fault over his delay when they learned that he had earned two dollars.

"Now, girls, do you know where you are?" asked the guardian, turning to her charges.

"Lost in the wilds of New Hampshire," answered Jane dramatically.

"No, not lost. We shall soon be among friends. I promise you a great surprise when we get down so near the sea that you hear the pounding of the breakers on the beach."

"I gueth you will be thurprithed, too," ventured Tommy.

"What do you mean, Grace?" demanded Miss Elting.

"I would suggest that we get started," urged Harriet. "I'm hungry. I want my supper, breakfast and luncheon all in one. You forget that I am a drowned person."

"We are not likely to forget it," answered the guardian, smiling faintly. "Yes, we will carry our equipment in. Jane, suppose we break it into smaller packs, so it can be the more easily carried. I think we are all ready for a good meal, and that is what we are going to have very shortly now. You know you always get good meals at Wau-Wau."

"Wau-Wau!" exclaimed the Meadow-Brook Girls in chorus.

"Why, Wau-Wau is in the Pocono Woods," said Harriet. "We are a long way from there, aren't we?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" The guardian flushed guiltily. "I spoke without thinking."

No one except Harriet and Tommy gave any special heed to the final words of the guardian. The others were busy getting ready to move. They were in something of a hurry for their luncheon. Packs were divided up among them. Harriet insisted upon carrying one end of the trunk with Jane, in addition to the pack she had slung over her shoulder. They finally started down a narrow path that led on down to the shore, leaving some of their equipment behind

to be brought later on in the afternoon. As they neared the shore the boom of the surf grew louder and louder.

The girls uttered shouts of delight when finally they staggered out into the open with their burdens, on a high bluff overlooking the sea. The sea lay sparkling in the sunlight, while almost at their feet great white-crested combers were rolling in and breaking against the sandy bluff. The salt spray dashed up into their faces and the odor of the salt sea was strong in their nostrils.

"Isn't this glorious?" cried Harriet, with enthusiasm.

"I shouldn't think you'd ever want to see water again after what occurred this morning," replied Margery Brown.

"Oh, that! I had forgotten all about it. This is different, Buster. This is the real sea, and it's perfectly wonderful. Isn't it, Miss Elting?"

The guardian, thus far, had not spoken a word. There was a look of puzzled surprise on her face.

"What is it, Miss Elting?" questioned Harriet, instantly discovering that something was wrong.

"I—I thought we should find some others here," replied the guardian hesitatingly.

"I told you there wath no one here," answered Tommy.

"Whom did you hope to find?" asked Harriet Burrell.

"Some friends of mine. It has been a rocky road to Wau-Wau, and we haven't reached it yet," muttered the guardian under her breath.

"I don't understand this, girls," she continued. "I fear we have made a mistake. This isn't the place I thought we were seeking. I must confess that I am lost. But the real place can not be far away. We shall have to walk from this on. Are you equal to it?"

"Not till I get thome food," answered Tommy with emphasis. "I'm famithhed. I want thomething to eat."

"So do I, darlin'," added Crazy Jane. "But I don't see anything hereabout that looks like food. Do you?"

Margery sat down helplessly. Harriet was smiling. She understood something of the plans of the guardian now; yet, like her companions, she was disappointed that the promised meal was not at hand. Miss Elting recovered her composure quickly.

"We shall have to cook our own dinner, dears," she said. "Harriet, you sit down in the sun and rest; we will take care of the meal-getting."

"You treat me as though I were an invalid. I am able to do my share of the work, and to eat my share of the food, as you will see when we get something cooked."

Jane already had run back toward the road to bring some dry sticks that she had discovered when coming in. Miss Elting began opening the packs.

"Oh, this is too bad!" she cried. "We must have left that coffee pot with the other things out by the road."

"I'll get it." Tommy bounded away. Hazel assisted the guardian in getting the cooking utensils ready, Margery walked about, getting in the way, but not accomplishing much of anything else. There were cold roast beef, butter and plenty of canned goods. The bread that they had brought with them had been dissolved in the water of the ice pond, as had the sugar and considerable other food stuff.

Jane came in with an armful of wood and quickly started a fire. Tommy arrived some moments later with the coffee pot and other utensils. While all this was going on Harriet was spreading out their belongings so these might dry out in the sunlight. But the water for the coffee, secured some distance back, was brackish and poor. They made it do, however,

and as quickly as possible had boiled their coffee and warmed over the beef and canned beans as well. As for drinking water, there was none at hand fit for this purpose. Dishes were somewhat limited, many of theirs having been lost when the automobile went into the pond. But they were glad enough to do with what they had, and when Jane sounded the meal call, "Come and get it!" there was not an instant's hesitation on the part of any member of that little party of adventurous spirits.

"Now take your time, girls," warned Miss Elting. "We will not gulp our food down, even if we have a walk before us this afternoon. And we may have to sleep out-of-doors, but it will not have been the first time for the Meadow-Brook Girls."

"Ith thith the thurprithe that you were going to give us?" asked Tommy innocently.

"It is a surprise to me, dear. This isn't the place I thought it was at all. The joke is that I don't know where the right place is."

"Perhaps, if you would tell us where you wish to go, we might be of some assistance to you," suggested Jane McCarthy.

"You can't get the secret from me, Jane," answered the guardian smilingly. "I am going to keep that little secret to myself at all costs. Don't tease me, for I shall not tell you."

"It hath cotht a good deal already," piped Tommy. "Let me thee. It hath cotht one automobile, theveral thkirtth, and a girl drowned. Thome cotht that, eh? Pleathe path the beanth."

"Tommy has a keen appetite for beans this afternoon. Will you please open another can, Jane?" asked the guardian.

"Certainly. Will you have them cold this time, Tommy?"

"I will not, thank you. My father thayth there ith more real nourithhment in beanth than there ith in beeftheak. I gueth he knowth. He wath brought up on a bean farm."

"Then I'll take the beefsteak and never mind the nourishment," declared Jane, who was not particularly fond of beans.

"I'd rather have both," said Margery hungrily.

"Of courth you would," teased Tommy. "That ith why you——"

"Oh, say something new," groaned Buster.

Miss Elting permitted them to jest to their hearts' content. The more they talked the better was she pleased, because it kept them from eating too rapidly. Their meal finished and the dishes cleaned in salt water and sand, the guardian gave thought to their next move. But she was in no haste. The girls were allowed plenty of time to rest and digest their hearty meal,

which they did by sitting in the sand with the sun beating down on them. After the lapse of an hour she told the girls to get ready.

"I will say to you frankly that I do not know where I am, though I am positive we are on the right road. Our destination can not be so very far from here, and I believe we have ample time to reach it before dark. However, each of you will put a can of beans in her pocket. We will take the coffee, our cups and the coffee pot. Thus equipped, we shall not go hungry in case we are caught out over night. Then, again, there must be houses somewhere along this road. The first one we see I shall stop and make inquiries."

"What shall we do with the rest of our things?" questioned Hazel.

"Make them into packages and hide the lot. You might blaze a tree near the road, in case we forget. All parts of the road hereabouts look very much alike to me. There is a good place for a *cache* about half way between here and the highway. I should go in a few rods, but any food that is not in cans we had better throw away."

"I don't thee why we can't camp right here," said Grace.

"This is not the place to which we are going," Harriet informed her. "I don't know where it is, but, sooner or later, we'll arrive there."

Jane and Harriet Hid the Trunk.

"If we are lucky," added Tommy under her breath.

Jane had already started for the road. She was called back by Harriet to take hold of one end of the trunk. Together the two girls lugged this to the place on the path that had been indicated by Miss Elting. By going straight in among the trees a short distance they found rocks, under one of which was a hole hollowed out in former times by water, and which made an excellent place in which to stow their equipment until such time as they might be able to return for it.

Hazel, Margery and Tommy brought the rest of their belongings from the highway, Miss Elting and Hazel what had been left at their camping place, all being neatly packed away in the hollow in the rock. This done, and a mound of small stones built over it, the girls were ready to proceed on their journey.

The afternoon was now well along, so they started off at a brisk pace, led by the guardian. Harriet appeared to have fully recovered from her accident. About an hour later they came in sight of a farmhouse. The guardian directed the girls to sit down and rest while she went up to the house to make some inquiries. When she returned her face was all smiles.

"I know where I am now," she called.

"How far have we to go?" asked Harriet.

"About five miles, they say, but one has to make allowances for distances in the country. It is difficult to find two persons who will agree on the distance to any certain point."

"Five mileth, did you say?" questioned Tommy.

"Yes, dear."

"Thave me!"

"We shall easily make it in two hours. I don't think we can go astray. So long as we keep within sound of the sea we shall be right. If you are ready, we will move on."

Once more they set out. They had gone on less than an hour when Margery began to cry. Tommy regarded her with disapproving eyes. Margery declared that she couldn't walk another step. Inquiry by Miss Elting developed the fact that Buster had a blister on her right foot. This meant another delay. Miss Elting removed the girl's shoe from that foot and treated the blister. Half an hour was lost by this delay, but no one except Tommy Thompson complained. Tommy complained for the sake of saying something. She teased Margery so unmercifully that Miss Elting was obliged to rebuke her, after which Tommy went off by herself and sat pensively down by the roadside until the order to march was given.

The afternoon was waning when once more they came in sight of the sea. The setting sun had turned the expanse of ocean into a vast plain of shimmering, quivering gold. The Meadow-Brook Girls uttered exclamations of delight when they set eyes on the scene. For a few moments they stood still, gazing and gazing as if it were not possible to get enough of the, to most of them, unusual spectacle.

A full quarter of a mile ahead they observed that the shores a little back were quite heavily wooded, though the trees were small and slender. This particular spot seemed to have attracted Miss Elting's attention to the exclusion of all else. As she looked, a smile overspread her countenance. The girls did not observe it.

"We are nearly there," she called.

"Near the camp?" asked Tommy.

"Yes, the camp, you little tantalizer," chuckled the guardian. "But you will not know what camp until you reach it."

"Oh, yeth I thall. It ith our camp, the Meadow-Brook camp."

"I hear shouts. I do believe they are girls'," cried Crazy Jane. She glanced inquiringly at Miss Elting, but the latter's face now gave no hint as to what was in her mind. "Come on; let's run, girls."

With one accord they started forward at a

brisk trot. This brought a wail from the limping Margery.

"Wait for me," she cried. "I—I can't run."

To their surprise Tommy halted, waited for Buster, then, linking an arm within hers, assisted Margery to trot along and keep up with her companions. Miss Elting gave Grace an appreciative nod and smile, which amply repaid the little girl for her kindly act. They covered the distance to the miniature forest in quick time, impelled by their curiosity, now realizing that they were to meet with the surprise that their guardian had prepared for them. Harriet had a fairly well defined idea as to what was awaiting them, but even she was to be happily surprised.

They reached a point opposite the little forest, when, as they looked toward the sea, visible in spots between the trees, they discovered a row of tents, and in the center of an open space a flag fluttering from a sapling from which the limbs and foliage had been trimmed.

"It's Camp Wau-Wau!" shouted Crazy Jane. "Come along, darlin's. Let's see what else there is to surprise us."

The girls rushed in among the trees, shouting and laughing. They brought up in the middle of the encampment and halted. A middle-aged, pleasant-faced woman stepped from a tent,

gazed at them a moment, then opened her arms, into which the Meadow-Brook Girls rushed, fairly smothering the woman with their affectionate embraces.

CHAPTER VI

AT HOME BY THE SEA

"OH, my dear Meadow-Brook Girls!" cried the woman. "And I did not know you were coming. Why did you not let me know?" Mrs. Livingston, the Chief Guardian of the Camp Girls, held her young friends off the better to look at them.

"We did," replied Miss Elting. "When you wrote that you would be glad to have us join the camp, I made the arrangements and wrote you that we would be here yesterday."

"I never received the letter."

"But why do you call thith plathe Camp Wau-Wau?" demanded Grace. "Camp Wau-Wau ith in the Pocono Woodth, Mrs. Livingthton."

"Yes, my dear; but a camp may move, may it not? This is the same old Camp Wau-Wau, but in a different location. This year we concluded to make our camp by the sea shore, and chose Lonesome Bar for our camping place."

"Lonesome Bar!" exclaimed Miss Elting.

"That explains it. We were looking for Lonesome Cove."

"Which we found," chuckled Harriet.

"We've had the most awful time, and Harriet got drowned," put in Margery Brown.

"Drowned?"

"Yeth, thhe did," nodded Tommy eagerly. "And we had thuch a time undrowning her! Thhe thwallowed a whole ithe pond of water."

Miss Elting here explained to the Chief Guardian what had happened. Mrs. Livingston was amazed. She gazed curiously at the smiling Harriet.

"I suppose I should not be surprised at anything Harriet does, but that you all should have fallen into a pond with your car is incredible. What became of the car?"

"It's there!" chuckled Jane. "They'll be cutting it out in sections when they take ice from the pond next winter, I reckon. Where can I send a letter? I must have another car, and that quickly! It's something like hard labor to get in and out of this place! But let's be introduced to these nice girls that I see in camp here."

"You are the same old Jane, aren't you?" answered the Chief Guardian, with an indulgent smile. "I trust your father is well?"

"He is, thank you, but he'll be wanting to have nervous prostration when he hears about

my driving into an old pond. Hello, little girl! Have I seen you before?" questioned Crazy Jane, catching a little golden-haired girl by the arm and gazing down into the latter's blue eyes.

"This is Miss Skinner, from Concord, young ladies," introduced Mrs. Livingston.

"How do you do, Mith Thkinner," greeted Tommy. "Like mythelf, you aren't fat, are you?"

"I am not," replied Miss Skinner.

"Where do we stow our belongings?" asked Miss Elting.

Mrs. Livingston looked puzzled.

"Every tent in the camp is full," she replied. "Really, I do not know what I am going to do with you, girls."

"That is easily answered. We will sleep out-of-doors," proposed Jane. "We were out all last night, and in our wet clothing at that."

"How soon will you have vacancies?" asked Miss Elting.

"Four girls will be leaving the last of next week, Miss Elting. Others, I don't recall how many, are to go about the middle of the week following. Until then I fear you will have to shift for yourselves."

"We can have something to eat, can't we?" interjected Margery, in a hopeful tone.

"Yeth, Buthter mutht have thomething to eat all the time," averred Tommy.

"There is plenty for all. Now, come and meet our girls. We have a very fine lot of young women at Camp Wau-Wau this summer, and we think we have an ideal camp, too. I am so sorry that I did not know you were coming. I might make room for two of you on the floor in my tent. There isn't a bit of floor space left in any of the other tents."

"I think we all should prefer sleeping out-of-doors, so long as the weather remains fine," answered Miss Elting.

"That is just the point. What will you do when it rains?" smiled Mrs. Livingston.

"I know," spoke up Tommy. "I'll jutht run and jump into the othean and get wet all over, all at onthe; then I won't mind it at all. Do you thee?"

"I do," replied the Chief Guardian gravely.

Mrs. Livingston already had begun introducing the Meadow-Brook Girls to the Camp Girls, most of whom had not been in Camp Wau-Wau when the Meadow-Brook Girls had visited it in the Pocono Woods two seasons before. By the time the introductions had been finished and the camp inspected, supper time had arrived. The girls sat down at long tables in brightly lighted tents and enjoyed a delicious supper. It

was the first real meal the newcomers had enjoyed in more than a day, and they did full justice to this one, especially did Margery, though openly teased by Tommy because of her appetite.

Mrs. Livingston had been kept thoroughly informed of the progress of the Meadow-Brook Girls through her correspondence with Miss Elting, so that she was fully prepared to bestow the rewards that the girls had earned. A council fire was called for that evening, at which the achievements of Harriet Burrell and her companions were related to the camp, and the beads that each of the five girls had earned were bestowed. Harriet now had quite a string of colored beads, the envy of every Camp Girl. Each of the other girls of the Meadow-Brook party had performed either heroic or meritorious acts, for which they were rewarded by the gift of beads according to the regulations of the order. Unfortunately, the now badly damaged trunk that had been carried at the rear of Jane McCarthy's car contained their ceremonial dresses, so that the Meadow-Brook Girls were unable to appear in the regulation costume; and they also lacked other important equipment, namely, blankets in which to wrap themselves for outdoor sleeping.

"There is not an extra blanket in camp," said

Mrs. Livingston, when the situation was explained to the Chief Guardian. "I don't know what we shall do. I fear you girls will have to go into town and stay at a hotel."

"Oh, no. We have slept out-of-doors under worse conditions," declared Harriet. "Please do not concern yourself over us. We shall get along very nicely. Do you happen to have an extra piece of canvas in camp?"

"There is a side wall that we use for covering our vegetables, such as potatoes. You may use that if you wish, but I warn you it is not very clean."

"We will give it a good dusting. It will answer very nicely to lie on and we'll sleep close together to keep warm. I am not sure but I should prefer sleeping out in that way. The Indians many times slept in the open without covering. I don't see why we shouldn't do the same."

"Are there any thnaketh here?" inquired Tommy anxiously.

"Oh, no," the Chief Guardian replied smilingly.

"Any bugth?"

"Naturally, there are some insects; fleas, perhaps, but you don't mind those."

"No. My father thayth I hop around like a thand flea at a clam bake mythelf, but if I wath

fat I couldn't do that, could I?" asked Tommy with a sidelong glance at Buster.

Margery, who had been an interested listener to the conversation, now turned her back, elevating her nose disdainfully. She made no reply to Tommy's fling at her. Harriet already had gone to bring the canvas, which was to be their bed for the night. She determined on the morrow to make bough beds for herself and companions, provided any suitable boughs were to be had. The canvas was dragged to a level spot. Jane and Hazel scraped the ground clean and smooth while Harriet was beating the canvas to get the dust out of it. This done, the canvas was spread out on the ground and folded over twice, leaving sufficient of it to cover them after they had taken their positions for the night.

Tommy regarded the preparations with mild interest.

"Who ith going to thleep next to the wall?" she asked.

"We thought we should place you next to the fold," replied Miss Elting. "You can't kick the cover off there."

"And where ith Buthter going to thleep?"

"In the middle."

"That ith all right. I don't withh to be too clothe to her. We might thquabble all night."

"Now, Tommy, you first," nodded Harriet.

Tommy took her place on the canvas with great care, gathering her skirts about her, turning around and around as if in search of the softest possible place on which to lie.

"You are thure Buthter ithn't going to thleep near me?" persisted Miss Tommy.

"Yes, yes. Please get in," urged Miss Elting.

"I jutht wanted to know, that ith all." She lay down, then one by one her companions took their places on the canvas. Harriet was the last to turn in. Before doing so she drew the unoccupied half of the canvas over the girls, leaving Tommy at the fold, as had been promised. There were no pillows. It was a case of lying stretched out flat or using one's arm for a pillow. The latter plan was adopted by most of the girls, though Harriet lay flat on her back after tucking herself in, gazing up at the stars and listening to the surf beating on the shore as the tide came rolling in. Now and then a roller showed a white ridge at its top, the white plainly visible even in the darkness, for the moon had not yet risen.

The campfire burned low, the camp itself being as silent as if deserted. Now and then twitterings in the tree tops might have been heard; were heard, in fact, by Harriet Burrell,

but not heeded, for her gaze was fixed, as it had been for some moments, on two tiny specks of light far out on the dark sea. One of the specks was green, the other red. They rose and fell in unison, now and then disappearing for a few seconds, then rising high in the air, as it appeared. The two lights were the side lights of a boat, red on the port and green on the starboard, and above them was a single white light at the masthead.

"According to those lights the boat is heading directly toward the beach," mused Harriet reflectively. "I wonder if I ought to show a light? No. They know where they are going. Besides, they can see the light of the campfire. The wind is increasing, too."

Harriet dozed. She awakened half an hour later and gazed sleepily out to sea. The same lights were there, though they now appeared to be much nearer. All of a sudden they blinked out and were seen no more.

The girl sat up, rubbing her eyes wonderingly. "Could they have sunk? No, of course not. How silly of me! The boat has turned about, and the lights are not visible from behind." But she did not lie down at once. Instead, she rested her chin in the palms of her hands and gazed dreamily out over the water. A fresh, salty breeze was now blowing in. She could hear the

flap, flap of the canvas of the tents off in the camp, a thin veil of mist was obscuring the stars, the pound of the surf was growing louder and the swish of the water on the beach more surly.

All at once what looked to her to be a huge cloud suddenly loomed close at hand, then began moving along the beach.

"Mercy! what is it?" exclaimed the girl under her breath. She crept from beneath the canvas and ran down to the beach. "It's a ship! How close to the shore they are running, and they have no lights out."

Harriet watched the vessel for some moments. She saw it swing around a long, narrow point of land a short distance to the south of the camp and boldly enter a bay. She was unable to make out with any distinctness what was being done there, but she heard the creak of the boom as it swung over and the rattle of the tackle as the sails came down, though unable to interpret these sounds. Soon there came a sharp whistle from human lips, answered by a similar whistle from the shore, then all was quiet.

Harriet Burrell crept back under the canvas, wondering vaguely what could be the meaning of this. She was too sleepy to think much about it and soon dropped into a sound sleep, from which she was destined to be rudely awakened.

CHAPTER VII

A SUDDEN STORM

THE canvas that covered the sleeping Meadow-Brook Girls was suddenly lifted from them, then whipped back with a force that nearly knocked the breath out of some of them.

A chorus of yells greeted the giant slap of the canvas, and a bevy of girls rolled and scrambled out of the way.

"Hold it down, or we shall lose it," cried Harriet, her voice barely heard in the roar of the wind. But no one of the party seemed inclined to act as an anchor for the canvas, which was rolled, then whisked out of sight.

"There, now you have done it!" shouted Crazy Jane McCarthy. "We sleep on the ground for the rest of the night!" A gust of wind had thrown Jane off her balance and knocked her down.

"Take hold of a tree," advised Harriet.

"I can't get to one," wailed Margery. "I can't walk."

"Creep," suggested Tommy shrilly.

"Yes, we must seek cover. I fear there will be rain soon," added Miss Elting. "This is an

awful blow. I can feel the spray from the ocean."

"Will the ocean come up here?" questioned Margery apprehensively.

"No. Don't be foolish," answered Harriet. "But we shall get wet, all the same."

Half walking, half crawling, the Meadow-Brook Girls crept farther back among the small trees, through which the wind was shrieking and howling. They saw the campfire lifted from the ground and sent flying through the air, leaving a trail of starry sparks in its wake.

"There go the tents!" cried Miss Elting.

A medley of shouts and cries of alarm followed hard upon the guardian's words. A gust more severe than any that had preceded it, and of longer duration, had rooted up the weakened tent stakes or broken the guy ropes. A whole street of tents tipped over backward, leaving their occupants scrambling from their cots, now in the open air.

"Girls, see if you can lend the Wau-Wau girls assistance," commanded Miss Elting. "Hurry!"

About all that was necessary to get to the distressed campers was to let go of the trees to which the Meadow-Brook Girls had been clinging. The wind did the rest, and they brought up in confused heaps near and beyond the uncov-

ered tents. Cots had been overturned by the sudden heavy squall, blankets and equipment blown away. The cook tent was down and the contents apparently a wreck.

"Cling to the trees! Never mind saving anything now!" cried Mrs. Livingston, whose tent had shared the same fate as those of her charges. "Take care of yourselves first. The squall is blowing itself out. It will soon pass."

Almost before the words were uttered, the gale subsided. A sudden hush fell over the camp. "There!" called Mrs. Livingston. "What did I tell you? Now, hurry and get the things together. Never mind sorting out your belongings. We must get some cover over us as soon as possible, for we are going to have rain."

The rain began in a spattering of heavy drops. The thunder of the surf was becoming louder and louder, for the sea had been lashed into foamy billows by the brief, though heavy, blow. The waves were now mounting the bluff back of the beach, leaving a white coating of creamy foam over a considerable part of the ground below the camp.

"Do you think it ith going to rain?" questioned Tommy.

"It is, my dear," answered Mrs. Livingston. "You had better prepare yourself for it."

"Yeth, I think tho, too. I think I will. I told

the girlth what I would do. Here goeth." Tommy turned and ran toward the beach at full speed.

"Come back, Tommy! Where are you going?" called Miss Elting.

"I'm going to fool the rain. I'm going to get wet before the rain cometh."

"Maybe she is going to do as she said—jump into the ocean," suggested Margery Brown.

Harriet suddenly dropped the piece of canvas at which she had been tugging, and started after Tommy, who had already headed for the bluff, and was running with all her might, apparently to get into the water before the rain came down hard enough to soak her. The little lisping girl had no intention of getting into the water, knowing full well that by standing on the edge of the bluff a moment she could get a drenching that would be perfectly satisfactory so far as a thorough wetting was concerned. But even in this Harriet Burrell saw danger.

"Don't go near the edge, Tommy!" she shouted.

Tommy Thompson merely waved her hand and continued on. Nor did she halt until she had reached the edge of the bluff, having waded through the white foam with which the ground had been covered. She stood there, faintly outlined in the night, and with both hands thrown

above her head as if she were about to dive, uttered a shrill little yell.

"Stop! Come back!" begged Harriet.

"I'm going to take a thwim," replied Tommy.

A great, dark roller came thundering in. It leaped up into the air, hovered an instant, then descended in an overwhelming flood right over the shivering figure of the little Meadow-Brook Girl standing on the edge of the bluff. Harriet had reached the scene just in time to get the full force of the downpour. Neither girl could speak, both were choking, when suddenly the ground gave way beneath their feet and they felt themselves slipping down and down until it seemed to Harriet as if they were going to the very bottom of the sea.

Now they were lifted from their feet. They were no longer slipping downward. Instead, they were being carried up and up until they were free from the choking pressure of the water, and once more were breathing the free, though misty, salt air of the sea.

"Oh, thave me!" wailed Tommy.

"I'll try. I don't know. We have been carried out to sea by a receding wave. The bank gave way. Oh, what a foolish girl you are! Swim! Swim with all your might! We shall have to fight hard. We may not be able to save ourselves as it is. Swim toward the shore!"

"Whi—ch way ith the thhore?" wailed Tommy.

"I don't know. I can't see. I think it must be that way." She placed a firm grip on Tommy's shoulder, turning the smaller girl about, heading her toward what Harriet Burrell believed to be the shore. She wondered why she could see no light over there, having forgotten that the campfire had been blown away in the squall.

The two girls now began to swim with all their might. It seemed to them, in their anxiety, as if they had been swimming for hours. Harriet finally ceased swimming and lay floating with a slight movement of her arms.

"What ith it?" questioned Grace.

"I don't know."

"But you thee thomething, don't you?"

"That is the worst of it. I do not. Look sharp. Can you make out anything that looks like the shore?"

"I thee a light! I thee a light!" cried Tommy delightedly.

"Yes; I see it now. That must be on the shore. We have been going in the wrong direction. Swim with all your might!"

For a few moments they did swim, strongly and with long overhand strokes, Tommy and Harriet keeping close together, Harriet ever

watchful that a swell did not carry her little companion from her. They had made considerable progress, but still the shore seemed to have disappeared from view. The light that Tommy had discovered had gone out. At least, it was no longer to be seen. Harriet stopped swimming, and, raising herself as high as possible out of the water, again and again took quick surveys of their surroundings. The seas were heavier and less broken where they now were. Slowly it dawned upon Harriet Burrell that they were in deep water. She raised her voice in a long-drawn shout. Both listened. No sound save the swish of the water about them was to be heard. The wind had not come up again, but a fresh, salty breeze was blowing over them, chilling the girls, sending shivers through their slender bodies.

"Oh, what thhall we do?" sobbed Grace. "What can we do to thave ourthelveth?"

"I don't know, Tommy. About all we can do is to keep up our courage and wait for daylight. We must keep moving as well as we can, or we shall get so cold that we shall perish."

"Wait until daylight? Oh, thave me! I thall die—I thurely thall. Thave me, Harriet!"

"Keep up your courage, darling. We are far from being goners yet, but we have before us a night that will call for all the courage we pos-

sess. Now pull yourself together and be a brave little girl."

"I don't want to be brave; I want to go home," wailed Grace.

"So do I, and we shall go as soon as we are able to see where home is," answered Harriet, forcing a laugh.

"Then why don't you go?"

"I can't."

"I'm going." Tommy began to swim. Harriet propelled herself up to her companion and grasped her by an arm.

"Tommy, you *must* obey me! You don't know where you are going. You may be swimming out to sea for all you know. Be a good girl and save your strength. The night may become lighter later on, then we shall manage to reach the shore somehow."

"But why don't you go now?"

"Because I don't know where the shore is, dearie. We are lost, just as much lost as if we were in the middle of the Atlantic," answered Harriet solemnly.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN NIGHT

"BE brave! Remember that you are a Meadow-Brook Girl, Tommy," encouraged Harriet. "We are swimmers. We can't drown unless we get into a panic. There is a boat somewhere hereabouts. I saw one sail into the cove, or the bay, whichever it is, before I went to sleep this evening. The men surely will be coming out in the morning; then, if we are too far from shore to get in, we ought to be able to attract their attention. They will pick us up."

"Do—do you think we are far from thhore?"

"I fear so. Still, I can't be certain about that. I am dreadfully confused and don't know one direction from another. I wish the moon would come up. That would give us our points of compass. Perhaps the clouds may blow away after a little. We shall at least be able to see more clearly after that."

"Oh, I'm tho cold! I'm freething, Har-r-r-i-e-t."

"I will fix that. Come, swim with me. We will ride the waves," cried Harriet. The swells were long and high. Now they would ride to the

top of one, then go slipping down the other side on a plane of almost oily smoothness. At such times Tommy would cry out. Even Harriet's heart would sink as she glanced up at the towering mountains of water on either side of them. It seemed as if nothing could save them from being engulfed, buried under tons of dark water. At the second when all hope appeared to be gone they would find themselves being slowly lifted up and up and up until once more they topped another mountainous swell.

Fortunately for the two girls, the tops of the swells were in most instances solid, dark water. The strong wind having gone down, the crests generally showed no white, broken foam. When such an one was met with it meant a rough few moments for the Meadow-Brook Girls and a severe shaking up. Tommy had been in the surf on many occasions, when at the sea shore with her parents, and understood it fairly well. Harriet had never been in the salt water, but was guided wholly by the instincts of the swimmer, of one who loved the water, and for whom it seemed almost her natural element, and in the excitement of the hour she at times forgot the peril of their position. So far as she knew they might already be far out to sea, with a mile or more of salt water underneath them.

In the meantime there was intense excitement

in the camp. Miss Elting had been a witness to the sudden disappearance of Grace and Harriet. She had seen both girls enveloped in the cloud of spray and dark water. Jane McCarthy had gone bounding toward the beach, followed by their guardian and several of the Camp Girls, who, though not having seen Harriet and Grace disappear, surmised something of the truth.

Reaching the edge of the bluff, they saw at once what had occurred. A large portion of the sandy bluff had sloughed off and slipped into the sea, having been loosened and undermined by the persistent smash of the waves against the bluff. Jane started to leap down, but Miss Elting caught her in time.

"No, no, no," protested the guardian; "you must not!"

"But they are down there drowning!" screamed Crazy Jane.

"There is nothing we can do to save them. They aren't there. You can see they are not."

"But if not, where are they?" cried Jane.

"My dears, if they went in there they undoubtedly have been carried out. The undertow is very strong in a storm such as this," said Mrs. Livingston sadly. She had hurried down to the beach upon seeing the others running in that direction, to ascertain the cause.

"Some one get a boat!" screamed Margery.

The Chief Guardian shook her head sadly.

"There is no boat here. Even if there were, we could not launch it against that sea, nor would it live a moment did we succeed in getting it launched. We can do no more than trust in God and wait. You see the wind is blowing on shore and——"

"No, it is blowing off toward the cove. The wind has shifted," answered Jane McCarthy. "But that doesn't help us a bit."

"Gather wood and build a fire," commanded Mrs. Livingston.

The Camp Girls hurriedly set about gathering fuel for a fire, but having brought wood, the fuel refused to burn. The rain had thoroughly soaked everything. The merest flicker of flame was all they were able to get. They tried again and again, but with no better results, finally giving up the attempt altogether.

"I am afraid we shall have to let it go," decided the Chief Guardian. "A light would help so much, and, if the two girls are alive, would serve as a guide for them."

Jane interrupted by uttering a shrill cry. She listened, but there was no response. She cried out again and again, then finally gave up the effort.

"I'm afraid they are gone," she moaned.

"Unless they were hurt when the wave struck them I do not believe they are lost," said Miss Elting, with a calmness and hopefulness that she really did not feel, though she dared not permit herself to admit that Harriet and Grace really had been lost. "Both are excellent swimmers, and Harriet never would give up so long as there was a breath of life left in her body."

"But can't we do something?" pleaded Margery.

The Chief Guardian shook her head sadly.

"I fear we can not. You have but to look out there to know that any efforts on our part would be futile."

Miss Elting suddenly cried out.

"Girls, what can we be thinking of? We must patrol the beach. The sea is going down a little. Divide up into pairs; keep as close to the shore as possible without being caught by a wave; then search every foot of the beach all along. I will go up the beach. Hazel, you come with me. Mrs. Livingston, will you have the other girls assist us?"

The Chief Guardian gave the orders promptly. Fifty girls began running along the shore. Mrs. Livingston quickly called them back, dividing the party into groups of two. She was very business-like and calm, which, in a measure, served to calm the girls themselves.

"Look carefully," she cautioned. "The missing girls may have been washed ashore; they may be found nearly drowned, and it may not be too late to revive them. Make all haste!"

There was no delay. The Camp Girls took up their work systematically. A thorough search was made of the beach in both directions, the patrols eventually returning to the Chief Guardian to report that they had found no trace of the missing girls.

"Keep moving. They may drift in," commanded Mrs. Livingston.

The search was again taken up, pairs of girls going over the ground thoroughly, investigating every shadow, every sticky mass of sea weed that caught their anxious glances, but not a sign of either of the two girls did they find.

An hour had passed; then Mrs. Livingston called them in. She directed certain groups to return to camp and begin getting the tents laid out, and to put up such as were in condition to be raised. The Chief Guardian herself remained on the beach with Miss Elting and the Meadow-Brook Girls. There was little conversation. The women walked slowly back and forth, scanning the sea, of which they could see but little, for the night was still very dark. At first they tried calling out at intervals, ceasing only when their voices had grown hoarse. To none of their

calls was there any reply. Harriet and Tommy were too far out, and the noise about them was too great to permit of their hearing a human voice, even had it been closer at hand.

Meantime the two girls were now swimming quite steadily. Harriet knew that, were they to remain quiet too long, they would grow stiff and gradually get chilled through. That would mark the end, as she well understood. Then again it was necessary to give Tommy enough to do to keep her mind from her troubles, which were many that night.

All the time Harriet was straining eyes and ears to locate the land. She had not the remotest idea in which direction it lay, and dared not swim straight ahead in any direction for fear of going farther away. The wind died out and rose again. Had it continued to freshen from the start, she would have permitted herself to drift with it, but Harriet feared that the wind had veered, and that it was now blowing out to sea, what little there was of it, so she tried to swim about in a circle in so far as was possible. Tommy, of course, knew nothing of what was in the mind of her companion, nor did Harriet think best to confide in her.

"I'm getting tired. I can't keep up much longer," wailed Grace.

"Rest a moment on your back. I will keep a

hand under your shoulders so you won't sink. If only one knew it, it isn't really possible to sink, provided the lungs are kept well filled with air and no water swallowed."

"I could think like a thtone if I let mythelf go."

"Don't let yourself go. There is every reason why you should not, and not one why you should."

"Yeth." Tommy turned over on her back. "Did you ever thwallow thalt water?"

"I never did."

"Then don't. It ith awful. Oh, I'm tho tired and I'm getting thleepy."

Harriet roused herself instantly. She gave Tommy a brisk slap on one cheek. Tommy cried out and began fighting back, with the result that she was the one to swallow salt water. Tommy choked, strangled and floundered, still screaming for Harriet to save her. Instead Harriet let her companion struggle, keeping close to her, but making no effort to help.

"Thave me!"

It was a choking moan. Uttering it, Tommy disappeared. Harriet lunged for her and dragged her companion up, and none too soon, for the little girl had swallowed so much salt water that she was really half drowned. Harriet shook her and pounded her on the back, all the time

managing to float on the surface of the water, evidencing that Harriet was something of a swimmer. Yet she was becoming weary and the sense of feeling was leaving her limbs. She realized that it was the chill of the Atlantic and that unless she succeeded in restoring her circulation she would soon be helpless. Just now, however, all her efforts were devoted to the task of arousing Grace. The little girl began to whimper and to struggle anew.

"I am amazed at you, Tommy," gasped Harriet. "You, a swimmer, to swallow part of the ocean!"

"I didn't. The ocean thwallowed me—e."

"You must work. Swim, Tommy!"

"I—I can't. I'm tho tired." Grace made languid efforts to prove that she was weary. There could be no doubt of it. She did not have the endurance possessed by her companion, and even Harriet's strength was leaving her, because of that terrible numbness in her lower limbs, a numbness that was creeping upward little by little.

"I will help you. But you must do something for yourself. Turn over on your stomach. There. You need not try to fight it, just make swimming motions, slowly. Not so fast. Now you have the pace."

"I can't keep it. My limbth will not work.

My kneeth are thtiff. Oh, Harriet, I think I'm going to die!"

"Nonsense! Why, you could swim all night, if necessary, and be up in time for six o'clock breakfast just the same."

"Breakfatht. It will be fithh for breakfatht for Tommy Thompthon, I gueth. Fithh, Harriet, fithh," mumbled Grace, then ceased swimming. "Fithh!"

"Poor girl, she is about done for!" muttered Harriet Burrell. She turned Tommy over on her back and, placing a hand under the little girl, began swimming slowly. The added burden was almost more than Harriet, in her benumbed state, was able to handle. She knew that she could not support Grace and herself through the rest of that long, dark night. She knew, too, that unless they were rescued, her companion would be past help by the end of another hour. It already seemed hours since they had slipped into the sea and rode out on the crest of a receding wave. Now her movements were becoming slower and slower. She seemed not to possess the power to move her limbs. It was not all weariness either; it was that dragging numbness that was pulling her down.

Harriet fought a more desperate battle with herself than she ever had been called upon to fight before. She did not now believe that they

would be rescued, but that did not prevent her keeping up the battle as long as a single vestige of strength remained. It was sheer grit that kept Harriet Burrell afloat during that long, heart-breaking swim among the Atlantic rollers on this never-to-be-forgotten night.

But at last the girl ceased swimming. Her limbs simply would not move in obedience to her will; her arms seemed weighed down by some tremendous pressure; her head grew heavy and her senses dulled.

"I believe this is the end," muttered Harriet. One great struggle, then her weary muscles relaxed. For a few moments she floated on her back, turned over with a great effort, then settled lower and lower in the water, all the time fighting to regain possession of her faculties, but growing weaker with each effort.

Then Harriet Burrell went down, dragging Tommy with her.

CHAPTER IX

A SURPRISE THAT PROVED A SHOCK

IT could not have been very long, not more than a few seconds, before Harriet Burrell's benumbed senses began to perform their natural functions. Deep down in her inner consciousness was the feeling that, though the surf was breaking over her, underneath her was something solid, immovable. In a vague sort of way she wondered at this, but for the time being was too weary and dulled to reason out the cause of the phenomenon.

After a time the girl began to feel little pains shooting up her arms, reaching to her shoulders and down along her spine. Again was her wonderment aroused. Little by little her heavy eyelids struggled open. But her eyes saw only black darkness and water. Harriet, by a supreme force of will, now began to reason the cause.

"I am still in the water, but my hands and feet are on something solid. What does it mean?" she thought.

Turning her head slightly, she saw that which increased her wonderment. Tommy Thompson was sitting beside her, the little girl's head lean-

ing against Harriet. It struck Harriet as peculiar that Tommy was able to sit on the water with nearly half her body out of the water. Harriet then discovered that she was crouching on all fours. It was a peculiar position for her, too. She wondered, if able to maintain that position, why she might not stand up just as well.

"I can do it!" she screamed. "I can stand on the——" She paused. Tommy had toppled over and lay on her side, partly covered with water. "Land!" breathed Harriet. "We are on land, but there is water all about us. I don't understand."

Pondering over this for a moment, Harriet stooped and lifted Grace to a sitting posture. Her blood had begun to circulate and a warm glow was suffusing her entire body.

"Tommy, wake up! Wake up! It's land. We are on solid ground. Don't you understand?"

"Breakfatht for fithh," muttered Tommy. Harriet shook her as vigorously as she could. It required no little effort to get Grace wide enough awake to understand what Harriet was saying, but after a short time Tommy seemed to understand, understanding that finally came to her with a shock almost equal to that that Harriet had felt.

"We—we are on thhore?" she questioned.

"Yes, yes. Let's get out of the water. Come, dear, I will support you." This she did, though Harriet staggered and was barely able to support herself. She slipped a cold arm about Grace's waist. "Make your feet go." The two girls stumbled forward, Tommy now having an arm about Harriet's waist, then with a scream from Tommy they stepped off into deep water and went in all over.

"Thave me, oh, thave me!" moaned Tommy as they came up.

But the plunge had done them good. It had shaken both girls wide awake and cleared their clouded minds. They once more had been awakened to a realization of their position.

"It wathn't land at all! Let me go, let me die," insisted Tommy, struggling to free herself from Harriet's grasp.

"It was a sand bar," explained Harriet. "Please behave yourself, Tommy. You must *do* something. It is all I can do to take care of myself. Now, please, help me by helping yourself and we shall be on dry land in a few moments."

Grace made several awkward attempts to swim, then gave it up.

"I can't do it, Harriet. What ith the uthe of trying to thwim any more?"

"Don't you understand? We were on a sand

bar. It was that that saved our lives after we were overcome. We should have drowned had it not been for the bar."

"Yeth, but we are in deep water again," wailed Tommy.

"Think, think! Don't be so stupid. We must be near the shore. I don't believe there would be a shallow place like that one far out from land."

"Do you think tho?" Tommy's voice was weaker than before.

"I am sure of it. Swim. That's a good girl."

"I—I can't."

"Then I will swim for you."

Once more Harriet Burrell placed a hand under Grace and began swimming with her. The surf was behind them and was rapidly carrying them with it toward either the shore or the sea, Harriet neither knew nor thought which. Had she not been still half dazed she might have smelled the vegetation on shore, not so very far from them, but of this she took no heed. She swam, summoning all her strength to the task, knowing that she would not be able to keep up much longer. Then all at once her hands touched bottom. A moment more and she lay full length upon the wet, sandy bottom with the waves breaking over her. Harriet groped with her hands and found that the water at arm's

length ahead was but a few inches deep. She sprang up with a weak cry.

"Tommy, Tommy! We've made it."

"Fithh," muttered Grace.

Harriet grasped her by the arms and began backing toward shore, dragging her companion with her.

The ground grew more and more solid as she backed. There could be no doubt now. They were rapidly getting to dry land. Here, unlike the beach fronting the camp, the ground sloped gradually up away from the sea, then extended off among the trees a level stretch for some distance.

Tommy struggled a little when Harriet raised her to her feet. The latter did not know which way camp lay from where they had landed, but she decided that it must be to the right of them. In this surmise Harriet was correct, but the camp was farther away than she had thought. She staggered along, half leading, half carrying, her companion, until, exhausted by her efforts, she sank down, Tommy with her.

"I can't go another step; I'm tired out," gasped Harriet.

"Ye-t-h," agreed Grace weakly.

The two girls toppled over and stretched out on the wet ground, clasped in each other's arms. They were almost instantly asleep. Tired na-

ture could endure no more, and there they continued to lie and slumber through the remaining hours of the night.

Break of day still found patrol parties running along the shore, alternately searching the beach and gazing out to sea. An occasional boat was sighted far out, but that was all. No signs of the missing Meadow-Brook Girls had been found. Ever since the dawn, however, Crazy Jane McCarthy had been taking account of the direction of the wind, which was blowing across the bay to the right of their camp. She decided to investigate that part of the coast on her own account, going far beyond the farthest point that had been reached by any of the patrols.

Suddenly Crazy Jane uttered a yell that should have been heard at the camp, but was not. She had discovered the girls lying on the beach—still locked in each other's arms.

Jane rushed to them, and, grabbing Tommy, began shaking her. Harriet raised her heavy eyelids, sat up and rubbed her eyes. Tommy tried to brush Jane aside.

"Fithh for breakfatht," she muttered.

"Oh, Jane, is it really you?" stammered Harriet, trying to keep from lying back and again going to sleep.

"Oh, my stars, darlin's! And we thought all the time that you were both drowned. Don't

tell me a thing now. I'll go right back and get some of the girls to help me get you back to camp."

"No, no; we can walk. There is nothing the matter with us except that we are tired out. Tommy, Tommy, wake up! It is morning and we are safe and dry. Think of it!"

"I—I don't want to think. I want to go to thleep."

Jane lifted and shook the little lisping girl until Tommy begged for mercy, declaring that she would rather go to sleep than return to camp. It required no little effort to get the girl to try to walk. Harriet herself would have much preferred going back to sleep, but after a time, with their arms about Tommy, they managed to get her started, upon which they took up their weary trudge to the camp, more than a mile away, stumbling along with Tommy, half asleep nearly every minute of the time.

It was almost an hour later when a great shout arose from the camp as the girls were discovered slowly approaching. There was a wild rush to meet them. Every girl in camp, including the guardians, joined in the rush to welcome the returning Meadow-Brook Girls.

CHAPTER X

SUMMONED TO THE COUNCIL

"THEY'RE saved! They're saved!" shouted fifty voices, their owners almost wild with delight. With one common impulse they gathered up Tommy and Harriet and started to carry them into camp. Tommy offered no resistance. She submitted willingly. With Harriet it was different. She struggled, freed herself from the detaining arms, and sprang away from her rejoicing companions, laughing softly.

"I am perfectly able to take care of myself, thank you," she said.

"You certainly do not look it," declared the Chief Guardian. Harriet's face was pale, her eyes sunken, with dark rings underneath them, but in other ways she appeared to be her old self. "We shall both be as well as ever after we have had something warm to eat and drink."

"Tell us, oh, tell us about it," cried several girls in chorus.

"Not a word until after the girls have had something to eat and drink. They are completely exhausted. Mrs. Livingston gazed wonderingly at Harriet Burrell, knowing full well

that the latter had borne the greater share of the burden in the battle that she must have had to fight through the long, dark night.

The cook girls were already making coffee and warming up food left over from their own breakfast, as being the quickest way to prepare something for the returned Meadow-Brook Girls. That meal strengthened and cheered them wonderfully. Tommy began to chatter after having drunk her first cup of coffee. Their companions sat about in a semi-circle watching them, scarcely able to restrain their curiosity as to what had happened during the night. Jane opened the recital by a question.

"Did you really mean that you wished fish for breakfast, Tommy?" she asked.

Grace regarded her with a frowning squint.

"I didn't want any fithh for breakfatht. It wath the fithh that wanted me for their breakfatht."

"And there are sharks off this coast, too!" gasped one of the girls.

"Were you in the water for long?" asked Miss Elting.

"It seemed like a long time, it seemed like hours and hours," admitted Harriet, accompanying the words with a bright smile that the keen-eyed Chief Guardian saw was forced.

"For hours!" cried the girls in chorus.

"If you feel able, please tell us about it," urged Hazel.

Mrs. Livingston shook her head.

"Both girls are going to bed immediately. Please fix up two cots for them in my tent. No, no," she added in answer to Harriet's protests, "it is my order. You are to turn in and sleep until supper time, if you wish; by that time we shall have the camp put to rights and you may talk to your hearts' content."

The Chief Guardian led the two girls to her tent, assisting them to remove their damp clothing, putting them in warm flannel night gowns and tucking them in their cots. Harriet insisted that she did not wish to be "babied," but the guardian was firm. After tucking them in Mrs. Livingston sat down on the edge of Tommy's cot and began asking her questions, all of which Tommy answered volubly, Harriet now and then offering objections to her companion's praise. In a few moments the Chief Guardian was in possession of the whole story of the night's experiences.

"You are the same brave Harriet that we came to know so well at our camp in the Pocono Woods," said Mrs. Livingston. "There are not many like you; but we shall speak of your achievements later. Now I will draw the flap, and I do not wish to see it opened until sundown.

I know that I may depend upon you to obey orders."

Harriet nodded. "There is something I should like to ask. Did you see anything of a sail boat in the bay this morning?"

"No. Why?"

"I saw one come in last night before the blow. It anchored in the cove. They had put out their lights before coming in, which made me wonder."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Yes, I know. I wondered if they had been blown ashore?"

"We should have known of it if such had been the case. But I can't understand what a boat could be doing in here. This is a remote place where people seldom come. That was why I chose it for our summer camping place. I will ask the girls if they saw anything of the boat you mention, but it is doubtful."

"Another thing. Oh, I'm not going to keep you here talking with me all day."

"No; I want to go to thleep," interjected Grace.

"I saw a cabin down on that long point of land just this side of the bay. What is it?"

"A fisherman's cabin. It is not occupied, nor has it been in a very long time."

"Then why can't we Meadow-Brook Girls use

it while we are in camp? I should love to be down by the water, with the sea almost at my feet."

"I should think you would have had enough of the sea, after your dreadful experience of last night," laughed Mrs. Livingston.

"I am fascinated with the sea. It is wonderful! Do you think we could have the cabin?"

"I will consult with Miss Elting. If she thinks it wise, I will see what can be done. Of course, it is a little farther from the camp than I like. I prefer to have my girls where I can have an eye on them at all times. But the Meadow-Brook Girls can be depended upon to take care of themselves, save that they are too venturesome. Yes, I will see what can be done."

"Oh, thank you ever so much," answered Harriet with glowing eyes. "Then, if we wish, we may sleep out on the sands when the nights are warm."

"I shall have to think about that,. my dear. Now go to sleep. This evening I shall have more to say."

Tommy was already asleep. Harriet dropped into a heavy slumber within a very few moments after the Chief Guardian's departure. She did not awaken until the sun had dipped into the sea. As she forced herself to a realization of her surroundings, the merry chatter of voices

was borne to her ears and the savory odor of camp cooking to her nostrils.

In the meantime an active day had been spent by the Camp Girls. There was much to be done, for the camp was in a confused condition after the storm of the preceding evening. A day of labor had given a keen zest to the appetites of the campers; added to this was the satisfaction of having completed their work. The camp now was in trim condition. Acting upon the orders of the Chief Guardian, the wood had been laid for a council fire. The orders had been issued for the girls to don ceremonial dress and report for a council at eight o'clock that evening.

The girls wondered what important subject was to come up for consideration, as it was not the evening for the regular weekly council fire that was always held during the summer encampment. Of all this Harriet was unaware. When she awakened she found dry clothing laid out for her to put on. The same had been done for Grace, who was still sleeping soundly. Harriet shook the little girl awake.

"It is nearly night, dear," she said. "How do you feel?"

Tommy blinked several times before replying. "How do I feel? Not tho wet ath I did latht night. I thmell thupper!" exclaimed Tommy, sitting up suddenly.

"I told you it was nearly night. Let's go out and see the girls. How good they all are to us!"

"I thuppothe they will all be looking at me and following me about ath though I wath thome thort of curiothity," complained Grace.

"Of course you would not like that. It would embarrass you, wouldn't it, Tommy?"

"It would embarrath me more if they didn't," answered Tommy honestly, puckering her face into frowns and squinting up at Harriet so whimsically that the older girl burst into a peal of merry laughter.

Instantly following the laugh, Jane's head was thrust through the tent opening. The head was in disorder, for Jane had found no time to attend to her hair. She had been working, which meant that she had been accomplishing things, for Jane was a host in herself when it came to work.

"Excuse the condition of my crowning glory, darlin's, but I couldn't wait to comb it. I have been sent to tell you that the grease is on the bacon and the potatoes are popping open in the hot ashes of the cook fire. We're going to cut off the tops of them, dig out a tunnel and fill the tunnel with butter. Um, um! Now, what do you think of that?"

In a twinkling Tommy was out of bed and gleefully hurrying into her clothes.

"I thought it would interest you, darlin'," chuckled Jane.

"You dress as if you were going to a fire," declared Harriet, with a good-natured laugh.

"She is," answered Crazy Jane; "the camp fire—the cook fire, I should say."

Tommy, during this dialogue, had not uttered a word. Finally, having got into her clothes to her satisfaction, she darted from the tent, spinning Jane half-way around as she dashed past her, the little girl twisting her hair into a hard knot as she ran.

"I want a potato with a hole in it," she shouted the moment she came in sight of the cook fire. Some one snatched a hot tuber from the ashes and tossed it to her. Tommy caught the potato, but dropped it instantly and began cooling her fingers. "I want one with a hole in it," she insisted.

"Bring it here and you shall have it," replied Miss Elting. Instead of picking up the potato and carrying it, Tommy propelled it along with the toe of her boot. She did not propose to burn her fingers again. The guardian gouged out a hole to the bottom, filling the hole with butter, Tommy's eyes growing larger and larger. Then she began to eat the potato with great relish, after having seasoned it with salt and pepper. This was no time for words, nor

were any uttered until nothing but the blackened skin of the potato was left.

"Thave me!" gasped Tommy. "Pleathe, may I have another?"

"Don't you think it would be well to wait for supper?" suggested Miss Elting. "In your greediness you have forgotten the others."

"I beg your pardon, but I wath tho hungry! If you had been a fithh thwimming in the ocean all night you, too, would have an appetite. How would you like to be a fithh, Mith Livingthton?"

"I am quite content to be a mere human being," was the Chief Guardian's laughing reply. "Were you afraid when you found yourself out in the ocean all alone?"

"Afraid? I—I gueth I didn't think about that. I wath too buthy trying to keep from filling up with thalt water. Did you ever drink any of that water, Mith Livingthton?"

"Hardly."

"Then take the advice of a fithh, and don't."

All hands were called to supper, thus putting an end to the conversation, which had been heartily enjoyed by Mrs. Livingston. Tommy always was a source of amusement to her. She appreciated the active mind and the keen, if sometimes rude, retorts and ready answers of the little lisping girl.

After supper a short time was spent in visit-

ing among the girls principally to discuss the marvelous experience of the two Meadow-Brook Girls; then one by one the girls left to go to their tents to don their ceremonial dress, and in place of the regulation serge uniform of the Camp Girls figures clad in the ceremonial dress, their hair hanging in two braids over their shoulders, and beads glistening about their necks, began to make their appearance.

Barely had the girls put on their ceremonial costumes before a moccasined Wau-Wau girl ran at an Indian lope through the camp, crying out the call for the council fire:

"Gather round the council fire,
The chieftain waits you there,"

chanted the runner, circling the camp after having gone straight through the center from her own tent. The girls began moving toward a dark spot in the young forest where the wood for the fire had been piled, but not yet lighted.

"What are we going to do?" questioned Tommy.

Miss Elting said she could not say; that the Chief Guardian had called the council. Silent figures took their places, sitting on the ground, curling their feet underneath them, speaking no words, waiting for the flame that would open

the Wau-Wau council. At last all were seated. From among the number there stepped forward a dark figure who halted before the pile of dry wood, then, stooping, began rubbing two sticks together, while the circle of Camp Girls chanted:

"Flicker, flicker, flicker, flame;
Burn, fire, burn!"

A tiny blaze sprang from the two sticks, then the chant rose higher and higher, figures rose up, swaying their bodies from side to side in unison as the blaze grew into a flame and the flame into a roaring fire, the tongues of which reached almost to the tops of the slender trees that surrounded the camp of the Wau-Wau Girls.

"I light the light of health for Wau-Wau," announced the firemaker, turning her back to the flames and facing part of the circle of expectant faces on which the lights and shadows from the fire were playing weirdly.

This completed the opening ceremony. The council fire was in order, the purpose of the meeting would soon be explained, thus relieving the curiosity of some fifty girls who were burning to know what it was all about. Not the least curious of these was Tommy Thompson.

CHAPTER XI

A REWARD WELL-EARNED

"I'M just perishing to know what it's about," confided Margery Brown to the girl next to her. "What do you suppose it is?"

"I think it has something to do with last night," answered the Camp Girl.

"Oh! you mean about Harriet and Tommy?"

"Yes. Be quiet, the C. G. is going to say something."

The Chief Guardian had already risen. Passing about the circle, she extended a hand to each of the girls there assembled. There were no other greetings than the warm clasp of friendship and good-fellowship, but it meant much to these brown-faced, strong-limbed young women who had been members of the organization for a year or more.

The Chief Guardian took her place by the fire.

"My daughters," she said, "we have gathered this evening about the council fire, that ancient institution, to speak of matters that are near to the heart of each of us. Last night two of your number gave a marked demonstration of what a Camp Girl may do, of what pluck will

do, an exhibition of sheer moral courage, one of the greatest assets of a Camp Girl."

"That ith uth," whispered Tommy to Harriet Burrell, who sat beside her. Harriet's face was flushed. She feared the guardian was about to speak of her achievements, which Harriet was not at all eager to hear.

"I refer to the thrilling experiences of Miss Burrell and Miss Thompson in battling with the big seas far out there in the darkness, and with every reason to believe that their efforts would prove of no avail. It is not the battle of despair to which I refer. There was no such. Rather, it was that dogged courage that never even permits a suggestion of give-up to enter the mind of the fighter. It was a courage such as this, combined with rare judgment and physical ability, that makes it possible for Miss Burrell and Miss Thompson to be present with us at the council fire this evening.

"They have not told the story willingly. I had to draw it from them bit by bit, which I venture to say is more than any of my girls have succeeded in doing." The guardian smiled as she glanced about at the eager, flushed faces of the Camp Girls.

"Yes, yes!" they cried.

"As you all know, Miss Burrell, seeing the danger of her companion, hurried to her rescue,

with the result that both girls went into the sea. They were quickly carried out to sea by the undertow, which they fought away from and propelled themselves to the surface. Then they began swimming, but in the darkness were unable to see the shore. After a time, Miss Thompson, less strong than her companion, gave out. Then began the real battle, and though Miss Burrell was benumbed with cold, exhausted by her efforts, she managed by a great effort to keep herself and her companion afloat. Fortunately for them, the wind had shifted and they swam and drifted into the bay and eventually to the shore. We have no means of telling how long our two plucky Wau-Wau Girls were in the water, because they themselves cannot tell when they reached the shore—but, think of it! cast away on a dark and stormy ocean in a black night such as that was. That is a triumph, an act of courage and heroism that should be held up as an example to every Camp Girl in America. However, I should not advise any of you to attempt to emulate the example set by our two young friends,'' added the Chief Guardian warningly.

A ripple of laughter ran around the circle, then the ensuing silence was broken by a remark from Tommy which sent the girls nearest to her into a shout of laughter.

"Well, I thhould thay not!" exploded Tommy.

"You might tell the girls how you felt when you believed that all was lost," suggested the Chief Guardian smilingly, nodding at Tommy. "Do you recall how you felt in that trying moment?"

"I motht thertainly do."

"How did you feel?"

"I felt cold. I had what Harriet callth 'cold feet.' Then I gueth I didn't feel much of anything till I felt mythelf thitting in the thand with thome of me dry and thome of me wet, and Harriet trying to drag me out of the thudth."

"Out of what?" exclaimed the Chief Guardian.

"Thudth."

"Suds," interpreted Miss Elting. "Grace refers to the froth left on the shore by the beating waves."

"Yeth, thudth," repeated Tommy.

"Harriet, your companions would like to hear from your own lips about your experiences in the water."

"Oh, please, Mrs. Livingston, won't you excuse me?"

"If you wish, but——"

"My own part was nothing more than an in-

stinct to save myself, which every one possesses. I do want to say, though, that Tommy Thompson was the bravest girl I ever saw. She was not afraid, nor can she be blamed for getting numb and sleepy. I did myself. No one can ever tell me that Tommy isn't as brave a girl as lives. She has proved that."

"Yeth, I'm a real hero," piped Tommy with great satisfaction.

"A heroine, you mean, Tommy," corrected Harriet.

"Yeth, I gueth tho," agreed the little lisping girl amid general laughter, in which the Chief Guardian joined.

"There is nothing else that I can think of to say, Mrs. Livingston. We were fortunate; we have much for which to be thankful, for it was through no heroism on my part that we got ashore and were saved."

Harriet sat down, inwardly glad that her part of the story was told.

"We have our own views as to that," answered the Chief Guardian. "And now that we have cleared the way, I would say that the camp guardians have unanimously agreed on giving each of you two young ladies a full set of beads for your achievements of last night, for such achievements touch upon nearly all the crafts of our order. They have been worthily won and

will prove a splendid addition to the already heavy necklace of beads you have earned."

"I gueth we'll need a chain bearer inthtead of a torch bearer if we keep on earning beadth," suggested Grace.

The two girls were requested to step out. They did so, posing demurely before the blazing campfire.

Mrs. Livingston placed a string of beads about the neck of each of the two girls. There were beads of red, orange, sky blue, wood brown, green, black and gold, and red, white and blue, representative of the different crafts of the organization.

Linking hands and raising them above their heads, thus forming a chain about the blazing campfire, the Wau-Wau Girls began swaying the human chain, chanting in low voices:

"Beads of red and beads of blue,
Beads that keep us ever true;
Beads of gold and beads of brown,
Make for health and great renown."

Tommy, chancing to catch the eyes of Margery Brown on the opposite side of the circle, winked wisely at her. Tommy was in her element, but quite the opposite was the case with Harriet. She was uncomfortable and embarrassed, and though proud of the beads that had

been awarded to her, she felt that she scarcely had earned them. She was suddenly aroused by the voice of the Chief Guardian.

"Miss Thompson will be seated," she was saying. "Miss Burrell will kindly remain standing."

"Now you are going to catch it," whispered Grace, as she began stepping backward toward her place, which she did not quite reach. She sat down on Hazel instead, raising a titter among the girls near by who had witnessed the mishap. But the interruption was brief. The girls were too much interested in what was taking place there by the campfire. They had not the remotest idea what the Chief Guardian was going to do, though they felt positive that some further honor was to be paid to Harriet Burrell.

"I think I but voice the feelings of the guardians and the girls of Camp Wau-Wau, both those who are with us here for the first time and those who were members of this camp when the Meadow-Brook Girls joined, when I say that Harriet Burrell is deserving of further promotion at our hands. In the two years that she has been a member of our great organization she has worn the crossed logs upon her sleeve, the emblem of the 'Wood Gatherer'; she has borne with honor the crossed logs, the flame and smoke, the emblem of the 'Fire-Maker.' She

Harriet and Tommy Received Their Reward.

has, too, more than fulfilled the requirements of these ranks, filled them with honor to herself, her friends and the organization; and instead of earning sixteen honors from the list of elective honors, she has won more than forty, a record in the Camp Girls' organization. She has fulfilled other requirements that pertain to an even higher rank. She has proved herself a leader, trustworthy, happy, unselfish, has led her own group through many trying situations and emergencies, winning the love and enthusiasm of those whom she has led.

"My dear, what is the greatest desire of a Torch Bearer?"

"To pass on to others the light that has been given to her; to make others happy and to light their pathway through life," was Harriet's ready response.

There were those in the circle who quickly caught the significance of the Chief Guardian's question. Many were now aware what reward was to be bestowed upon the Meadow-Brook Girl.

"Who bring to the hearth the wood and kindling?" questioned the Chief Guardian.

"The Wood Gatherers."

"Who place the sticks for lighting?"

"The Fire Makers." Harriet's replies were prompt, but given with some embarrassment.

"Who rubs together the tinder sticks and imparts the spark that produces the flame?"

"The Torch Bearer," answered Harriet in a low voice. Her face now seemed to be burning almost as hotly as was the council fire before her.

"What are the further duties of a Torch Bearer?"

"To act as a leader of her fellows in their sports and in their more serious occupations, to assist them in learning that work, that accomplishment, bring the greater joys of life; to assist the guardian in any and all ways," was the low-spoken reply.

"Correct. And having more than fulfilled the requirements, I now appoint you to be a Torch Bearer, a real leader in the Camp Girls' organization, thus entitling you to wear that much-coveted emblem, the crossed logs, flame and smoke. Workers, arise and salute your Torch Bearer with the grand hailing sign of the tribe!"

CHAPTER XII

MYSTERY ON A SAND BAR

"I—I THANK you."

Harriet, placing the right hand over the heart, bowed low, and the ceremony was complete. The voices of the Wau-Wau Girls were raised in singing, "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." Then they ran forward, fairly smothering Harriet with their embraces and congratulations.

"You forget that I am the real hero," Tommy reminded them; whereat they picked up the little girl and tried to toss her back and forth, with the result that she was dropped on the ground.

The guardians added their congratulations as soon as they succeeded in getting close enough to Harriet to do so. Grace also came in for her share of congratulation and praise, with which she was well content.

"Come, girls," urged Miss Elting, "you know we have to make our beds, and the hour is getting late."

"I'm not thleepy," protested Grace, "I could thtay awake for ageth."

"You will be by the time we find our sleeping

place. It is some little distance from here." Harriet glanced at the guardian inquiringly.

"Yes, it is the cabin," answered Miss Elting. "Mrs. Livingston lost no time in arranging for us to occupy it, though I am not at all certain that it is the wise thing to do under the circumstances."

"Under what circumstances?" asked Harriet.

"Storms."

"But they can do us no harm."

"We shall have to take for granted that they will not. Mrs. Livingston sent to town to ask permission of the owner, who readily granted it. He had forgotten that he owned the cabin. It seems that no one has occupied it in several years. Mrs. Livingston also obtained some new blankets for us, but for to-night we shall have to put up with some hardships. To-morrow you girls can fix us bough-beds; then we shall be quite comfortable. But we shall have to cook out-of-doors, there being no stove in the cabin."

"We shan't be able to cook on the bar. The breeze from the sea is so strong there that it would blow the fire away."

"We must come to camp for our meals, then. Perhaps that would be better after all. We don't wish to run away by ourselves; and be-

sides this, you are now a Torch Bearer and must take a more active part in the affairs of the Camp, even if you are of the Meadow-Brook group," reminded the guardian.

Harriet nodded thoughtfully.

"How good and kind Mrs. Livingston is! And think of what she has done for me. It is too good to be true."

"What is too good to be true?" questioned the Chief Guardian herself.

"Everything—all that you have done for me."

"We are still in your debt. Now you had better be getting along. Will you need a light?"

"No, thank you. Harriet ith an owl. She can thee in the dark jutht ath well ath in the light," answered Tommy, speaking for Harriet.

The Meadow-Brook party, after calling their good nights, started toward the cabin, Harriet with the thought strong in her mind that only one rank lay between her and the highest gift in the power of the organization to bestow. She determined that one day she would be a Guardian of the Fire, but she dared not even dream of ever rising to the high office of Chief Guardian. Harriet's life would be too full of other things, she felt.

They trooped, laughing and chatting, along the beach, and, reaching the Lonesome Bar, fol-

lowed it out. The bar was a narrow, sandy strip that extended nearly a quarter of a mile out into the bay. About half way out the cabin had been built and for some time occupied by a Portsmouth man, who occasionally ran down there for a week-end fishing trip. The cabin, as a camping place, possessed the double advantage of being out of the mosquito zone and of being swept by ocean breezes almost continuously. A fresh breeze was now blowing in from the sea, and the white-crested rollers could be seen slipping past them on either side. It was almost as though they were walking down an ocean lane without even wetting their boots. The water was shallow on either side, so that even though they stepped off they were in no danger of going into deep water.

"We have forgotten all about a lamp!" exclaimed Harriet as they neared the cabin.

"That has been attended to," replied Miss Elting.

"You know we have been thleeping, Harriet," reminded Tommy—"thleeping our young headth off. Ithn't it nithe to be able to thleep while other folkth do your work for you?"

They had hurried on and Tommy was obliged to run to catch up with them. Miss Elting was lighting a swinging lamp when they entered the cottage, which consisted of one room, above

which was an attic, but with no entrance so far as they were able to observe. Six rolls of blankets lay on the floor against a side wall ready to be opened and spread when the girls should be ready for bed. One solitary window commanded a view of the sea. Tommy surveyed the place with a squint and a scowl. There was not another article in the place besides the blankets.

"There ithn't much danger of falling over the furniture in the dark, ith there?" she asked.

"Not when we have a Torch Bearer with us," answered Buster, from the shadow just outside the door.

"Thave me!" murmured Tommy.

"Oh, my stars! We'll laugh to-morrow, darlin'. It's too dark to laugh now. Come in and sit down, Buster. It isn't safe to leave you out there. No telling what you might not do after having given out such a flimsy 'joke.' "

"Where shall I sit?" asked Margery, stepping in and glancing about the room.

"Take the easy chair over there in the corner," suggested Harriet smilingly.

"But there isn't any chair there."

"That ith all right. You jutht thit where the chair would be if there were one," suggested Tommy.

"No sitting this evening," declared the guardian. "You will all prepare for bed. At least

two of you need rest—I mean Harriet and Tommy."

"Yeth, we alwayth need that. I never thhall get enough of it until after I have been dead ever and ever tho long."

"I am not sleepy, but, of course, being a leader now, I have to set a good example," said Harriet lightly.

Tommy squinted at her inquiringly, as if trying to decide whether or not it were prudent to take advantage of her now that Harriet was a leader officially. She decided to test the matter out at the first opportunity, but just now there was a matter of several hours' sleep ahead, so Tommy quickly prepared for sleep, after which, straightening out her blanket, she twisted herself up in it in a mummy roll with only the top of her tow-head and a pair of very bright little eyes observable over the top of the blanket.

Harriet waited until her companions had rolled up in their blankets; then she opened the door wide so that the ocean breeze blew in and swirled about the interior of the cabin in a miniature gale. The girls did not mind it at all. They thought it delicious. This was getting the real benefit of being at the sea shore. Harriet rolled in her blanket directly in front of the door with her head pillowed on the sill. To enter the cabin one would have to step over her. She

went to sleep after lying gazing out over the sea for some time.

"What's that?" Harriet started up with a half-smothered exclamation. A report that sounded like the discharge of a gun had aroused her, or else she had been dreaming. She was not certain which it had been. The other girls were asleep, as was indicated by their regular breathing. Harriet listened intently. She had not changed her position, but her eyes were wide open, looking straight out to sea. Nothing unusual was found there. She was about to close her eyes again when a peculiar creaking sound greeted her ears. Harriet knew instantly the meaning of the sound. It came from the straining of ropes on a sailboat.

Unrolling from the blanket and hastily dressing, the Meadow-Brook Girl crawled out to the bar, wishing to make her observations unseen by any one else. Now she saw it again, that same filmy cloud in the darkness, towering up in the air, moving almost phantom-like into the bay to the south of the cabin on Lonesome Bar.

"It's a boat. I believe it is the same one I saw in there before. But I can't be sure of that. I don't know boats well enough; then, again, the night is too dark to make certain. I don't know that it would be anything of importance if a boat were to run in here to anchor for the night.

That evidently is what they propose doing," she thought.

That Harriet's surmise was correct was evidenced a few moments later when the boat's anchor splashed into the waters of the bay and the anchor chain rattled through the hawse hole. Harriet tried to get a clear idea of what the boat itself looked like, but was unable to do so on account of the darkness. Now the creak of oars was borne faintly to her ears; the sound ceased abruptly, then was taken up again.

"They are putting a boat ashore!" muttered Harriet, who was now sitting on the sand, her hair streaming over her shoulder in the fresh, salty breeze. "I hope to goodness none of them comes out here. The girls would be terribly frightened if they knew about this. I don't believe I shall tell them, unless——"

Harriet paused suddenly as the sound of men's voices was heard somewhere toward the land end of the bar. She walked around to the rear of the cabin, peering shoreward. She made out faintly the figures of two men coming down the bar. They were carrying something between them—something that seemed to be heavy and burdensome, for the men were staggering under its weight.

The Meadow-Brook Girl realized that she was face to face with a mystery, but what that mys-

tery was she could not even surmise, nor would she for some time to come. She determined to act, however, and that, if possible, without alarming her companions. Hesitating but a moment, Harriet stepped out boldly and started up the bar to meet the mysterious strangers with their heavy burden.

CHAPTER XIII

A STRANGE PROCEEDING

THEY did not appear to see her until Harriet was within a few yards of them. Then they halted sharply, dropped their burden and straightened up. The right hand of one of them slipped to his hip pocket, then a few seconds later was slowly withdrawn with a handkerchief in it.

"It's a girl," exclaimed one of the pair in a low voice.

"Well, what do you think about that?"

"Hello, there, Miss! What is it? Who are ye?" demanded one of the men.

"I was about to ask the same question of you. What are you doing here?"

"This here is free coast, young woman. We've as good a right to be here as yourself, and maybe more right," returned the stranger.

"That depends, sir. I wish you wouldn't speak so loudly, either. You will awaken my companions. I would just as soon they did not see you, for I don't like the looks of you in the dark."

"Companions!" exploded one of the men under his breath. "Whew! Where are they?"

"In the cabin. We are occupying it now. Where were you going with that box? You know there is nothing but the sea beyond here. This is a bar. The mainland is the other way. Perhaps you thought you were headed up the beach?"

"Sure we did, Miss. Thank you. We'll be going. Sorry to have disturbed you. Got some provisions for a friend of ours who is down this part of the coast on a fishing trip. Thank you."

They gathered up their burden and started back toward the beach as fast as they could stagger, Harriet in the meantime standing where they had left her, gazing after them with forehead wrinkled into ridges of perplexity. Harriet watched the men all the way back to the beach. She saw them put down the box they had been carrying and stand looking back at her. Harriet quickly retraced her steps to the cabin, in the shadow of which she halted and continued her watching.

The men stood for some time, evidently en-

gaged in a discussion, though no sound of voices reached the listening girl. They then picked up their box and walked down the beach with it.

"That is odd. They said they were going up the beach with provisions for a friend. I don't understand this proceeding at all, but it looks questionable to me. I know what I'll do; I'll follow them."

The Meadow-Brook Girl did not stop to consider that she had decided upon a possibly dangerous adventure. Stooping over as low as possible and yet remain on her feet, Harriet ran full speed toward the beach. She saw the men halt and put down the box, whereat the girl flattened herself on the sandy bar and lay motionless until, finally, they picked up their burden and went on. She was able to make out the sailboat anchored some little distance out in the bay.

"They must have brought the box off from the boat," she mused. "I wonder what is in it? I am positive that there is some mystery here. It isn't my affair, but my woman's curiosity makes me wonder what it is all about. There they go again." She was up and off, this time reaching the beach before they put down the box again. Now Harriet was reasonably safe from discovery. She crouched close to the sandy

bluff and lay watching. She saw one of the men put off in a rowboat, which he propelled rapidly over to the sailboat. He did not remain there long, and she saw him pulling back to shore as if in more haste than when he went out.

"Now they are going to do something," decided the watching girl. "Yes, they are going to take the box."

The men did. Picking it up, they carried it back in among the trees, Harriet following at a safe distance, picking her way cautiously, not making the slightest sound in moving about among the spindling pines.

Finally, realizing that the men had stopped, the girl crouched down with eyes and ears on the alert. She could hear them at work. They were not going ahead, but they were engaged in some occupation the nature of which for the moment puzzled Harriet Burrell. Then all at once the truth flashed into her mind.

"They are hiding the box!" exclaimed the girl under her breath. "But why are they doing that? What secret could be so dark that it needs hiding in the woods? I shall make it my business to find out. There, they are coming out."

She threw herself on the ground. She could hear the men approaching. They seemed, from the sound of their voices, to be coming directly

toward her. Harriet gathered herself ready for a spring in case of discovery, which now seemed imminent, then again flattened herself on the ground.

"I won't run until I have to," she decided. Courage was required for a girl to remain in Harriet's position under the circumstances, but Harriet Burrell had plenty of this and to spare. In the meantime the men were rapidly drawing near. They were conversing in low tones, but the girl in hiding on the ground was unable to make out what they were saying. Rather was her attention centered on what they were going to do, which was the all-important question at that moment. But Harriet was not left long in suspense. The men were coming straight toward her. She could see them quite plainly now, and wondered why they did not see her. It was evident that they had not yet done so, perhaps because they were so fully occupied with their own affairs.

Harriet Burrell braced herself. To rise would mean instant discovery; to remain as she was, possible avoidance of it. She decided upon the latter course and lay still. Within a minute the expected occurred. The men had swerved to their right slightly, raising the hope in the mind of Harriet that they were going to pass her without discovering her. Instead a heavy

boot came in contact with her own feet. There followed a muttered exclamation, the man pitched headlong, the girl having stiffened her limbs to meet the shock the instant she felt the touch of the boot against her feet.

The man's companion laughed uproariously and was called sharply to account by the one who had fallen.

Now came the supreme test for Harriet. She could scarcely restrain herself from crying out, springing up and running away. Instead, she lay perfectly quiet, breathing as lightly as possible. The man got up growling.

"Confound these dark holes," he snarled.

"Hurt yourself?" questioned his companion.

"No, only skinned my wrist. Let's get back to the boat. Why doesn't the Cap'n do it himself instead of asking us to take all the risks and all the knocks to boot?"

"Because he is paying us for doing it. I reckon you'd better do as you're told if you want to come in for the clean-up. We'd better be hustling, too, for Cap'n wants to get under way. We've lost too much time already and we'll be in bad first thing we know."

The man who had fallen answered with an unintelligible growl. He had not looked behind him to see what he had fallen over. Instead, he wrapped a handkerchief about his wrist and

started on. The two men trudged on down toward where they had left their boat. They were nearly at the beach before Harriet Burrell finally sat up.

"Wasn't that a narrow escape?" she breathed. "He fell over me and never saw me. I wonder if my ankle is broken? It feels as though it were. How it did hurt when he kicked me! It is a wonder I did not scream. I wonder what they are going to do now?"

She got up and limped toward the beach, using a little less caution than she had done when coming out. She paused just at the edge of the trees, where she stood in the shadow observing the men. They shoved the boat off and followed it out a little way, splashing in the water with their heavy boots, for the beach was too shallow to permit their getting into the rowboat and rowing directly away from the shore. They first had to shove it off into deeper water. This was quickly accomplished, and piling in, one of the pair began rowing out toward the sailboat.

The Meadow-Brook girl sat down and began to rub her injured ankle. The rowboat was now merely a dark blotch out on the bay. The blotch neared the sailboat and was lost in the shadow that surrounded the larger craft. A few moments later Harriet heard the anchor being hauled in, then the creak of the rings on the

mast as the sail was being raised. The boat got under way quickly and with very little disturbance, swung to the breeze, the boom lurching to the leeward side of the boat with a "clank." Then the sailboat began moving slowly from the bay. There were no lights to be seen either within or without. The boat was in darkness. Harriet gazed with straining eyes until the boat had finally merged with the sea and was lost to view. A few moments later she caught the twinkle of a masthead light. She watched the light and saw that it was moving slowly up the coast.

"That's the last of them for to-night," she reflected. "I wonder where they put that box and what is in it? However, I can't look for it to-night. I will see if I can find out anything about it in the morning. I hope Miss Elting hasn't awakened and missed me."

Harriet stepped quickly down to the beach. She gained the bar and ran until she reached the cabin. Listening outside the door, she found that her companions were still asleep. She crept cautiously into the cabin, undressed, rolled in her blanket and lay staring up at the ceiling until her heavy eyelids closed and she was sound asleep. Her companions apparently had slept through the entire adventure, for which Harriet Burrell was thankful.

CHAPTER XIV

A VISITOR WHO WAS WELCOME

"WAKE up, girls. Put on your bathing suits and jump in." Miss Elting already was dressed in her blue bathing costume, her hair tucked under her red rubber bathing cap. "We have just time for a swim before breakfast. I see the smoke curling up from the campfire already."

"I don't want to thwim; I want to thleep," protested Tommy.

"Get a move, darlin', unless you want to be thrown in," interjected Jane, who was hurrying into her bathing suit. "Margery, don't tempt us too far, or we will throw you in, too."

"I am sleepy, too," declared Harriet, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. "I can't imagine what makes me feel so stupid this morning." Then, remembering, she became silent.

"If you would go to bed with the children and get your regular night's rest, you wouldn't be so sleepy in the morning," Jane answered with apparent indifference. Harriet regarded Jane with inquiring eyes. "I wonder if Jane really suspects that I was out of the cabin in the night, or whether it was one of her incidental re-

marks?" she reflected. "I'll find out before the day is ended."

"Am I right, darlin'?" persisted Jane, with a tantalizing smile.

"Right about what?"

"Being up late?"

"I agree with you," replied Harriet frankly, looking her questioner straight in the eyes. "I am losing altogether too much sleep of late."

"We didn't lothe any thleep latht night," added Tommy.

"You certainly did not, my dear; nor did Margery nor any of the others unless it were Crazy Jane," declared Harriet with a mischievous glance at Jane McCarthy, who refused to be disturbed by it or to be trapped into any sort of an admission.

"Girls, girls, aren't you coming in?" Miss Elting rose dripping from the bay and peered into the cabin. "Come in or you'll be too late."

"At once, Miss Elting," called Harriet. "It has taken me some little time to get awake. I am awake now. Here I come." She ran out of the cabin and sprang into the water with a shout and a splash, striking out for the opposite side, nearly a quarter of a mile away. She had reached the middle of the bay before the guardian caught sight of her and called to her to return. The Meadow-Brook girl did so, though

it had been her intention to swim all the way across the bay and back.

In the meantime the other girls had begun their swim. Jane was splashing about in deep water, Hazel doing likewise, while Margery was swimming in water barely up to her neck. Tommy, on the other hand, appeared to be afraid to venture out. Every time a ripple would break about her knees she would scream and run back out of the way.

" 'Fraid cat!" jeered Margery. " 'Fraid to come in where the water is deep."

"Yeth, I am," admitted Tommy.

"I told you so, I told you so," shouted Buster. "I always said she was a 'fraid cat, and now she has shown you that I am right."

"Who is a 'fraid cat?" demanded Miss Elting, pulling herself up on the beach with her hands.

"I am," answered Tommy, speaking for herself.

"Who says you are?"

"Buthter."

"Margery, I am ashamed of you. You have evidently forgotten that Grace showed how little she was afraid when she was lost at sea the other night," chided the guardian.

"Yeth, I'm a 'fraid cat. But I'd rather be a 'fraid cat than a fat cat!" declared the little,

lisping girl with an earnestness that made them all smile. Harriet came swinging in with long, steady strokes, the last one landing her on the sand with the greater part of her body out of the shallow water.

"Why wouldn't you let me go across, Miss Elting?" she asked.

"You would be late for breakfast."

"Oh! I thought you feared I might drown," answered Harriet whimsically.

"Once is enough," answered Jane. "There goes the fish horn. Hurry, girls! We are going to be late."

"The fithh `orn? Are we going to have fithh for breakfatht?" questioned Tommy.

"Never mind what, girls. Tuck up your blankets and get busy. Remember, you must braid your hair before going to breakfast. I don't like to see you at meals with your hair down; you girls are too old for that."

"Yes, Miss Elting," answered Harriet.

"I gueth I'll cut my hair off. It ith too much trouble to fix it every morning," decided Grace. "But, Mith Elting, couldn't I fix it the night before and thleep in it?"

"Certainly not! How can you suggest such a thing?"

Tommy twisted her face out of shape and blinked solemnly at Margery, whose chin was in

the air. They were all hurrying now, for their morning bath had given them keen appetites. Miss Elting was first to be ready, then Harriet, but they waited until their companions were dressed and ready to go.

"The Indian lope to the breakfast tent," announced Miss Elting. "Forward, go!"

The girls started off at an easy though not particularly graceful lope, the guardian and the Torch Bearer setting the pace for the rest. They arrived at the cook tent with faces flushed and eyes sparkling, with a few moments to spare before the moment for marching in arrived. The Chief Guardian smiled approvingly.

"Sleeping out on the bay appears to agree with you girls," she said. "I have no need to ask if you slept well."

"Harriet is the restless one," answered Jane.

Harriet flushed in spite of her self-control; but no special significance was attached to Jane's remark, for it was seldom that she was taken seriously.

Harriet, after recovering from her momentary confusion, chuckled and laughed, very much amused over what had made no impression at all on her companions.

"I shall ask some of our craftswomen here to build beds for the cabin," announced the Chief Guardian, as they were sitting down.

"It is not necessary," replied Miss Elting. "Our girls prefer the bough beds, which they will build during the day."

"And what will our new Torch Bearer do to amuse herself after the regular duties of the day are done?" questioned Mrs. Livingston. "Will she take her group for a swim in the Atlantic?"

"Yeth, Harriet and mythelf are going to try to thwim acroth thith afternoon," Grace informed them.

"Swim across the Atlantic? Mercy me!" answered Mrs. Livingston laughingly. "That would indeed be an achievement."

"I beg your pardon, but I didn't thay 'acroth the othean'; I meant to thwim acroth the pond down in the cove yonder. Harriet could thwim acroth the othean if she withhed to, though," added Tommy.

"You surely have a loyal champion, Miss Burrell," called one of the guardians from the far end of the table. "Still, we have not heard what you are going to do to-day. I am quite sure it will be something worth while?"

"I have about made up my mind to go out in search of buried treasure," answered Harriet, with mock gravity. They laughed heartily at this. Jane regarded her narrowly.

"I wonder what Harriet has in her little head now?" she said under her breath.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the Chief Guardian. "Buried treasure along this little strip of coast? Perhaps, however, you may mean out on the Shoal Islands."

"No, Mrs. Livingston. Right here in Camp Wau-Wau there is buried treasure. I don't know whether it is worth anything or not, but there is a buried treasure here."

The girls uttered exclamations of amazement, for they saw that their new Torch Bearer was in earnest, that she meant every word she had uttered about the treasure.

"Now, isn't that perfectly remarkable?" breathed Margery.

"Oh, do tell us about it?" cried the girls.

"Not a word more," answered Harriet. "I give you leave to find it, though, if you can. Some of you clever trailers see if you can pick up the trail and follow it to its end. At the end you will find the buried treasure, unless it has been taken away within a few hours, which I very much doubt. Now, that is all I am going to tell you about it."

"Do you really mean that, Harriet?" questioned Grace.

Harriet nodded.

"Why don't you get it yourthelf, then?"

"I may one of these days if the girls fail to find it. I wish to see if they are good trailers.

But we are forgetting to eat breakfast. Just now I am more in need of breakfast than of buried treasure."

"Yes, girls, please eat your breakfast. We must put the camp to rights as soon as we finish, for I have an idea that we may have visitors before the day is done," urged Mrs. Livingston.

The Wau-Wau girls were too much excited over Harriet's words to be particularly interested in the subject of visitors just then, so they hurried their breakfast, discussing the new Torch Bearer's veiled suggestions, eager to have done with the morning meal and the morning work that they might try to solve this delightful mystery. Harriet was well satisfied with the excitement she had stirred, though having done so would rather bar her from carrying out certain plans that she had had in mind ever since the previous night.

Later in the morning, however, under pretext of wishing to get pine boughs for her bed, she, with Tommy, strolled off into the woods, but beyond locating the spot where she had lain when the man stumbled over her in the darkness she made no progress toward solving the mystery. Not the slightest trace of the box did she discover. Of course, Harriet did not hope to find the mysterious box standing in plain sight, but

she could not imagine what they had done with it in so brief a time. She did not dare make much of a point of searching about, observing that Tommy was regarding her keenly during the morning stroll.

With her belt hatchet Harriet selected and cut such boughs as she desired and placed them in a pile, afterward to be carried out to the cabin on the Lonesome Bar. Later on they were assisted by the other Meadow-Brook Girls. They covered the floor of the cabin with the fragrant green boughs until Tommy declared that it made her "thleepy" just to smell it. In the meantime, those of their companions who were not engaged with camp duties were strolling about along the beach near the camp, discussing what Harriet had told them at breakfast that morning. It was all right to tell them to pick up the trail, but what trail was it, and how were they to find it? Even the guardians were not beyond curiosity in the matter, and they, too, when they thought themselves unobserved, might have been seen looking eagerly about for the "trail." All this amused Harriet Burrell very much.

With her group, Harriet was at the cabin arranging the boughs, when they were summoned to camp by three blasts of the fish horn used for the various signals employed by Camp Wau-Wau. Something had happened in camp.

"Thomebody hath found it!" cried Tommy, shooting a quick glance of inquiry at Harriet Burrell. The latter flushed, then burst out laughing after a look toward the miniature forest of spindling pines.

"I hope they have. But I may tell you, my dear Tommy, that they haven't found either the trail or my buried treasure."

"You must know pretty well where it is," said Miss Elting, eyeing Harriet steadily for a few seconds. "Come, we must not delay answering that summons."

They did not delay. The Meadow-Brook Girls responded promptly, making a run for it in good order.

"There's a motor car," shouted Jane, when they came in sight of the camp. "O darlin's, maybe it is a new car Daddy has sent down for me to take the place of the one that is drowned."

Jane leaped on ahead of her companions, intent upon reaching the camp. Harriet sprinted up beside her, almost as much excited as was Crazy Jane herself.

The two girls easily outdistanced their companions in a very few moments. It was a race between them to see who should first reach the camp. Harriet fell behind slightly as her quick eyes made out a figure sitting in front of the Chief Guardian's tent. The figure was that of a

man and he was conversing with Mrs. Livingston.

Jane uttered a sudden shrill cry. She, too, had discovered the visitor and recognized him.

"It's Daddy. It's my dear old Daddy!" she screamed, and, forgetful of the lectures she had received on comporting herself with dignity and restraint, Crazy Jane threw herself—hurled herself, in fact—into the arms of Contractor McCarthy. Now, a camp chair is never any too substantial. The one on which Mr. McCarthy was sitting was no exception to the rule. It collapsed under the force of Crazy Jane's projectile-like force. Mr. McCarthy, in attempting to save himself from going down with it, lurched sideways. In doing so he bumped heavily against the Chief Guardian, and with a sharp little cry from the latter, the three went down in a confused heap.

CHAPTER XV

TOMMY MAKES A DISCOVERY

A DOZEN girls sprang forward to the assistance of the unfortunate trio, but Harriet was ahead of them. She grasped the Chief Guardian under the arms and lifted her to her feet, then taking a hand of Mr.

McCarthy pulled him up with disconcerting suddenness. He looked dazed and a little sheepish.

"It's that mad girl Jane of mine," he explained.

Mrs. Livingston's face was flushed, her eyes snapped; then her angry expression softened and she burst out laughing.

"O Jane, Jane! You will be the undoing of all of us before you have done."

Jane, with her hair disheveled, stood ruefully surveying the scene.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Livingston, that you went over. I didn't want to make you fall down, but I just had to show Daddy how glad I was to see him."

"You showed me all right, young lady. Lucky for us all that we had soft ground under us. Mrs. Livingston, I suppose you'll be telling me to take this mad-cap daughter of mine home with me. I shouldn't blame you if you did, and I don't think I'd cry over it, for I want her. No, I don't mean that——"

"Daddy!" rebuked Jane.

"I mean that she is better off here, and you are doing her a heap of good, Mrs. Livingston, even if she did give way to one of her old fits of violence just now."

"Certainly not, Mr. McCarthy," answered the

Chief Guardian promptly. "We all love Jane. She is a splendid girl and we should miss her. I certainly did miss her last summer, and now I should miss her more than ever. I hope we shall have her with us for many summers; then one of these days, when she is older, she, too, will have a camp of girls to look after."

"I feel very thorry for the camp," broke in Tommy.

"You will have to buy a new camp stool, Daddy," reminded Jane. "I'm glad I'm not so stout that I break up the furniture every time I sit on it."

"Yeth, Buthter doeth that," said Tommy, nodding solemnly.

"And you, young lady, you've got some strength in those arms," he said, turning to Harriet. "The way you bounced me to my feet was a wonder. Tommy, you haven't shaken hands with your old friend. Come here, my dear, and shake hands with me."

"You were tho mixed up that I couldn't tell which wath the hand to thhake," replied Grace promptly. "That wath what Jane callth a meth, wathn't it?"

"It was. Why, how do you do, Hazel—and Margery, too? Well, well! this is a delightful surprise. How fine you all look. And I hear you had a swim the other night, Harriet, and

you, too, Tommy. Well, well! And you like the water, eh?"

"It is glorious," breathed Harriet, instinctively glancing out to sea, where a flock of gulls were circling and swooping down in search of food.

"You won't have to swim any more unless you wish to. I've made different arrangements about that."

"You mean you have bought me a new car, Daddy?" interrupted Jane.

"I haven't said. I reckon you don't need a car here. You must have learned, from your recent experience, that an automobile doesn't travel on water half as well as it does on land."

"Ourth did. It traveled fine until it got to the bottom," Tommy informed him.

"No, I haven't bought another car yet. I have some men who are going to get the old one up to-morrow. We shall see what shape she's in. Of course, if she isn't workable any more, I will have another for you by the time you get home. Tell me how it happened. I couldn't make much out of your telegram. By the way, when you send a telegram, don't forget that you aren't writing a letter. That telegram you sent cost me nine dollars and thirty-seven cents."

"Isn't it worth that much to hear from your daughter?" Jane's eyes were dancing.

Mr. McCarthy took off his hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"What would you do with her, Mrs. Livingston?" he laughed.

"I should love her, Mr. McCarthy; she is worth it," was the Chief Guardian's prompt reply.

"She is," he agreed solemnly, "and I do. But you haven't told me, Jane, darling."

"Oh, let Harriet do it. I never was strong on telling things so any one could understand what I was talking about."

"There isn't much to tell about the accident, except that we turned off on a side road according to directions. Jane wheeled down it at a slow rate of speed—for her," added Harriet under her breath. "We ran out on an ice pier and plumped right into the pond."

"You went down with the car, then?" stammered Mr. McCarthy.

"Right down to the bottom," Tommy informed him.

"That did not amount to much," continued Harriet. "The top was not up. We had little difficulty in getting out——".

"But Harriet was drowned in getting the trunk free from the rear end," declared Jane earnestly.

"Drowned?" exclaimed the contractor.

"Yes, nearly drowned," corrected Miss Elting. "We had a pretty hard time resuscitating her. I am beginning to think that the Meadow-Brook Girls bear charmed lives, Mr. McCarthy."

"So am I. But you don't mean to tell me that Harriet really was all but drowned?"

"Yes."

"It does beat all, it does," reflected Mr. McCarthy, mopping his forehead again and regarding Harriet with wondering eyes. "It is a guess as to whether she or Jane can get into the most trouble. They are a pair hard to beat."

"We do not try to find excitement, Mr. McCarthy," expostulated Harriet. "We cannot always help it if trouble overtakes us the way it did when the car went into the ice pond."

"Certainly not. I know you, at least, are wholly to be depended upon, but Jane isn't always the most prudent girl in the world. Now, will you dears run along and enjoy yourselves. I have several things to discuss with Mrs. Livingston, then we will have an afternoon together. I wish Jane and Harriet to drive down with me and show me the place where they lost the car later on in the afternoon. You remember you interrupted our conversation here a short time ago, Jane," reminded the visitor.

"May I try the car, Dad?" questioned Jane.

"Yes. But look sharp that you don't wreck the thing. I have no fancy to walk all the way back to Portsmouth this evening," he chuckled.

"Come along, Meadow-Brooks. I can't take any more this trip, but if Dad's buggy goes all right, I'll take the rest of you out on the instalment plan."

"I don't want to go," decided Tommy. "I want to thtay here and retht. I never get any retht at all."

The others were eager to go. Jane already was cranking up the car. Her companions, with the exception of Grace Thompson, piled in, and a few moments later the car rolled from the camp, headed for the highway some little distance from the camp. There was no road leading to the camp, but the way was reasonably smooth, provided one dodged the trees, both standing and fallen.

In the meantime the other girls went about their duties and recreations. Mr. McCarthy and Mrs. Livingston again sat down and continued their conversation. Tommy, now being without a guardian, Miss Elting having gone with Jane and her party, started down toward the beach, her eyes very bright, her movements quick and alert. Some of the girls whom she met asked where she was going. Tommy replied that she might go fishing, but that she couldn't say for

sure until she found out whether she could catch anything. The little girl kept edging farther and farther away from her companions, until finally, finding herself beyond sight of them, began running with all her might. They saw no more of Tommy Thompson for several hours.

While all this was going on, Jane McCarthy was racing her father's car up and down the road at an ever-increasing rate of speed. Those in the camp could hear the purr of the motors, and now and then a flash of red showed between the trees as the car sped past the camp.

"Must be doing close to fifty miles an hour," observed Mr. McCarthy, grinning.

"Aren't you afraid she will kill herself, or some one else?" questioned the guardian anxiously.

"She never has. I don't reckon it would bother any of the Meadow-Brook Girls to go into the ditch. They are pretty well used to getting into mix-ups."

"They certainly have every reason to be used to it," nodded Mrs. Livingston reflectively. "But, were they my daughters, I must confess I should not know an easy moment. I do not, as it is, when they are out of my sight. That was the reason I hesitated to accede to your request. However, they will have nothing to do with the operation of it. All they will have to do will be

to sit still and enjoy themselves. Then, again, it is the one thing needful to make a summer at the sea shore thoroughly enjoyable. I know that all of my girls will take the keenest possible delight in it, and I thank you, on their behalf, for your thoughtfulness and kindness. You have done a great deal for our camp, as well as for our organization, and I wish you would permit me to make it known to the general officers in——"

"By no means, Mrs. Livingston," hastily interposed the visitor. "It is nothing at all, and it's just a little pride in that mad-cap daughter of mine that has led me to do what little I have. But in reference to the new plan, you will tell the girls to-day, eh?"

"No; you tell them."

"Oh, leave me out of it, please."

"I could not do that. You will take dinner with us to-day, of course, and then you may announce it to the girls. I can imagine how pleased they will be. Why, there come the girls now!" exclaimed the Chief Guardian.

"The girls?"

"Yes, yes. Jane——"

"Eh? Alone?"

"No, no. There is Miss Elting and Harriet. Yes, they are all there. What can it mean?"

"It means that they have smashed the car,"

groaned Mr. McCarthy. "I told you." He did not look around, but sat fumbling with his hat, his face very red. Jane stepped up before him, and with chin on her breast surveyed him from under her eyelashes. "Well?" he demanded.

"Well, we're here," answered Jane.

"What is the trouble, girls?" cried Mrs. Livingston. "Thank goodness, you are all here. Why doesn't some one speak up?"

"How much damage did you do to her, Jane?" questioned the visitor calmly, referring to the car.

"Enough."

"Tell me about it!"

"She's in the ditch about a mile up the road."

"Think we can pull her out between us?"

Jane shook her head.

"Not without the wrecking crew. She's bottom side up, two wheels off and part of her machinery on the other side of the road," was Crazy Jane's calm reply. However, before they had an opportunity to say more, Tommy Thompson came running toward them, her face flushed with excitement.

"I've found it! I've found it!" she shouted.

"Found what?" demanded the Chief Guardian.

"I've found the treathure trail. I've got it, I know I have!"

CHAPTER XVI

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

"SHE'S found the buried treasure!" screamed Buster.

The girls uttered a cheer. Harriet regarded Tommy's excited face inquiringly.

"You really have found it?"

"Yeth, yeth."

"Where is the treasure?"

"I don't know. How thhould I know?"

"But you said you had found it," interposed the Chief Guardian.

"No, I thaid I had found the trail. Of courthe, I haven't found the treathure. But I've found thomething, and——"

"What did you find? Come, tell us," urged Harriet.

Controlling herself somewhat, Tommy glanced triumphantly at the expectant faces about her.

"There wath a man at thith camp latht night."

"What?" The girls asked the question at the top of their voices.

"There were two men here latht night," persisted Grace.

"Please explain what you mean, Grace," com-

manded the Chief Guardian. "You say there were two men here last night. How do you know?"

"I found the markth of their feet—in the thand. But that wathn't all I found. There wath a boat here, too—a boat. Now, what do you think of that?"

"Try to be more explicit, Grace," urged Miss Elting. "Tell us what you have discovered, without beating about the bush so long."

"There wathn't any buthh to beat about. It wath right on the thand. Don't you underthtand?"

Miss Elting sat down. "Tell it your own way, then. We are simply wasting time in trying to hurry you," she said.

"Yeth. Well, it wath thith way. I wath looking for the treathure trail that Harriet told uth about at breakfatht thith morning, though I don't thee how thhe thhould know anything about it. My footthepth led me—led me, you understand? No, it wath my feet, not my footthtepth, that led me—right along the thhore of the ocean. And what do you thuppose I found?"

"An oyster shell," suggested Margery.

"No, not that. I found where a boat had been drawn up on the thhore and then thhoved out again. It had been drawn up on the thand. Then there were trackth about the place, trackth of

heavy bootth, and a mark in the thand where thomething heavy had been put down. It looked like a box. I gueth it wath. The men had taken the box between them and carried it up and down the thhore ath far ath I could thee. You know, the tide wathhed the marks out near down to the thea."

"What did they do with the box, dearie?" interrupted Harriet.

"That I have not yet dethided. I thhall find out about that later. Well, after a time, it theemth, they took the box up the thandy beach and into the woodth, but by that time it wath tho dark that I couldn't thee any more footprintth and couldn't tell what they did with the box."

"Marvelous," muttered Buster. "Excruciatingly marvelous!"

"Is this a fairy story?" demanded Mrs. Livingston.

"Ask Harriet," suggested Crazy Jane. "I think she knows more about it than Tommy does. Don't you, Harriet?"

"What makes you think that, Jane?" questioned Harriet mischievously.

"Ask me, darlin'."

"I have, dear."

Jane stepped over and whispered in Harriet's ear, the others regarding the proceeding with

puzzled expressions on their faces. Harriet's face broke out into a ripple of smiles.

"I am caught red-handed," she said. "It seems that I am not the only light sleeper in the Meadow-Brook camp. Jane chanced to observe something that I did last night. She has known it all along. She hinted at it this morning, and I suspected that she knew more than she had told us."

"But, my dear, we are all in the dark," reminded the Chief Guardian. "Won't you be good enough to explain this mystery? Surely you can do so in a way that will make it clear to us. Two men, a box and a boat and goodness knows what else, here on this lonely part of the coast."

"I was suddenly awakened last night," began Harriet without preliminary remarks. "A boat sailed into the bay close to shore and came to anchor. Then a small boat put off. Two men were in it. They came ashore with a heavy box, started down the bar, then back to the beach after I had met and stopped them. Tommy has told you the truth about their further movements."

"Wait a moment. You stopped them, you say?" questioned Mrs. Livingston.

"Yes. I didn't want them to get near the cabin and disturb our party. According to their story they had made a mistake. They had some

supplies for a friend of theirs who was on a fishing trip somewhere up the coast."

"You believed that to be the case, then?"

"No, Mrs. Livingston, I did not, because, instead of going up the beach after I had turned them back, they went the other way, eventually turning in among the trees, where they remained for some time. I did not see them again until they fell over me later——"

"What!" The guardian was more amazed than before.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that I followed them to see what they were going to do. I didn't find out, but they found me, though they were not aware of it." Harriet explained how she had lain down on the ground and how one of the two men had stumbled over her feet without discovering her presence. Exclamations of amazement greeted this part of the story.

"What became of them after that?" asked Miss Elting.

"They shoved off their rowboat, rowed out to the sailboat, which quickly weighed anchor and put out to sea. That is all I know about it. You see, Tommy was right."

Mrs. Livingston turned to Tommy.

"My dear, you did splendidly. Of all this camp of girls you were the only one who found the trail and read it aright. That is trailing for

you, Mr. McCarthy. But what could the men have been doing here? I do not like the looks of it at all."

"They have gone, so we needn't worry," replied Harriet. "I forgot to say that there was a boat in here—I think it was the same one—the other night just before the storm. It is my idea that they came in on that occasion to put something ashore, but were obliged to get out to sea before the storm broke. They came back on the following night to finish what they had failed to do the first time."

Mr. McCarthy nodded. So did Mrs. Livingston.

"Remarkable girls, these Meadow-Brook Girls, Mr. McCarthy. However, there is nothing to be done. We shall not be bothered any more, in all probability. Besides, they were not here on our account, so we have no cause to worry."

"And I've got to walk back to Portsmouth," groaned Mr. McCarthy. "I told you, Mrs. Livingston."

"Perhaps we may catch some farmer who is going in that direction, and who will be willing to give you a lift," she suggested.

"No; you will have to let me sleep under a tree and hang about to-night. The men are coming down in the morning to get the car out of the

pond. They might as well have two jobs as one. How did it happen, Jane?''

For the first time the party of Camp Girls who had gathered about the little group gave their attention to the Meadow-Brook Girls. The latter were now discovered to be much the worse for wear. Their hair was down over their shoulders and their clothes were soiled and torn.

''Got it hard, didn't you?'' chuckled Mr. McCarthy.

''Oh, not so much,'' replied Jane, repressing a smile.

''You are a thight. You look ath though you had been digging for buried treathure,'' declared Tommy.

''How'd it happen?'' rumbled Mr. McCarthy.

''It was like this, Daddy, dear. We were running along nicely and easily—just at a comfortable jog, when——''

''How fast?''

''How much time were we making, Harriet?''

''Nearly sixty miles an hour.''

''Yes, I knew it wasn't very fast. Just jogging, Daddy.''

The visitor grunted.

''Something went wrong with the steering gear. I don't know what it was, but the wheel had no effect on the car. You should have seen us. It was funny, wasn't it, girls, the way that

car darted from one side of the road to the other, and we hanging on for dear life? You see, that was all we could do—hang on. Well, the car jumped the ditch, went up the bank on that side of the road, smashed into the iron post of a wire fence, then stood up on end and turned over backward. Did you ever see such a contrary automobile? Where did you buy it, Dad?"

"Didn't buy it. Borrowed it of a man I know up at Portsmouth. It'll cost me only a few thousand to make it right with him, but then Dad's rich; don't you care."

"I never do," chuckled Jane. "Do you?"

"No, I don't, so long as no one gets hurt. How'd you get out? What did you do when the car was stopped by the fence?"

"We just went on over, Dad. You know nothing can stop a Meadow-Brook Girl when she is once well started on a course. We landed on plowed ground on the other side of the fence."

"Mercy!" exclaimed the Chief Guardian. "Can anything hurt you, girls?"

"I hope not," answered Harriet. "This was a little sudden, but we didn't mind it so very much, did we, Miss Elting?"

"I don't know who you mean by 'we,' but please do not include me in this particular 'we.' I am not over the shock of that plunge yet, nor do I expect to be for some hours to come. I fear

the car is ruined, Mr. McCarthy. I hope you will not send another one down here for Jane, if you will pardon my saying so." This from Miss Elting.

"That's all right, Miss Elting. I am not going to send another car at present. Perhaps when you young folks are ready to go home I may send a car for you, but I may give you a driver. For the present I've got something else in my mind. I had to wait until I asked Mrs. Livingston about it before I put it through. She thinks it will be fine. She will tell you all about it at dinner to-day."

"There goes the dinner horn now," announced the guardian of the Meadow-Brook Girls. "Girls, you are not presentable. Hurry and get ready for dinner. We mustn't be late to-day, of all days."

It was really marvelous that the girls were able to work such a transformation in themselves in so short a time. In the few moments that had been left to them they had rearranged their hair, brushed the dirt of the plowed field from their clothing and washed their faces and hands. It was really a jolly dinner, too, for the good-natured guest kept them all laughing with his humorous stories and odd remarks. He was so much like his daughter Jane that they had no need to be reminded of the relationship.

"This has been a day of excitement, hasn't it?" remarked one of the guardians to Miss Elting. "Buried treasure, automobile wrecks, visitors, mysterious strangers. Gracious me! what are the Camp Girls coming to?"

"I don't know. Did Mr. McCarthy say what the surprise is that he has in store for the girls? I thought perhaps he might have said something about it during our absence on that automobile ride."

"Not that I heard. He undoubtedly told Mrs. Livingston. There, she is speaking now," added the guardian.

Mrs. Livingston had risen and rapped on the table with a knife for attention.

"Our guest and good friend, Mr. McCarthy, wishes to make an announcement," she said, then sat down.

Jane's father got up, his face very red, his forehead glistening with beads of perspiration.

"Your guest and good friend most emphatically *does not* wish to make an announcement," declared the visitor. "But it is up to him to do so because he wishes to please that fine woman, your Chief Guardian—is that what you call yourself, Mrs. Livingston? I get all mixed up with various names and titles. It's as bad as attending a reception of the royal family, judging from what I've heard."

Mrs. Livingston nodded, smiling good-naturedly.

"Well, girls, you know I've got to do something to furnish that madcap daughter of mine with a variety of means of ending her life and those of her friends. She has exhausted everything thus far. However, this is a perfectly safe proposition, this one that I have planned for you and her, and I don't think any of you can get into serious difficulty through it."

"Don't keep us in suspense, Dad! Tommy will suffocate if you don't tell us now. She has been holding her breath ever since you began speaking," cried Jane.

A ripple of laughter ran along both sides of the table, but quickly subsided when Mr. McCarthy again began speaking.

"Very good, if you must know. But—I say, Mrs. Livingston, I think we won't tell them until to-morrow. As I think it over, I guess I won't tell them after all. They'll know all about it when it gets here. That's all." Mr. McCarthy sat down, wiping his forehead and looking vastly relieved.

A chorus of "Ohs!" greeted the announcement. "Please, please tell us, oh, do," they begged, but the visitor shook his head.

"I think, Mr. McCarthy, that I had better tell them if you do not wish to. They will be too

much upset otherwise," said the Chief Guardian. "Have I your permission?"

He nodded.

"As you wish. They've got me so flustered that I couldn't say another word to them."

"Very good. Listen, girls, and I will tell you," said the Chief Guardian.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN THEIR SHIP CAME IN

THERE was no need to further impose silence on the Camp Girls. Eager-eyed, they leaned forward, gazing straight at the smiling woman at the head of the table.

"I wanted Mr. McCarthy to tell you. However, as he refuses, I shall do so. You are to have a boat for the rest of the summer. The boat is the gift of Mr. McCarthy to the Meadow-Brook Girls directly, and to the rest of you indirectly."

"What kind of a boat ith it?" piped Tommy.

"A sailboat," answered the visitor. "I have appointed Miss Burrell as the commodore, though she doesn't know it. I understand she did very well as the captain of the 'Red Rover' last summer. Now we'll give her a trial on salt water. You will look to her for your orders and

permission to go out, and I imagine you won't have any cause to complain of her treatment of you, eh, Harriet?"

"O Mr. McCarthy! you embarrass me. But tell us about the boat," answered Harriet laughingly.

"It's just a little old sailboat, that's all—one I picked up at Portsmouth; but even though she's a tub, she is perfectly safe and you may go as far as you wish with her, always first consulting with the captain and the commodore."

"Oh, is there to be a captain? Am I to be the captain?" questioned Jane mischievously.

"My grathiouth, I hope not," exclaimed Grace.

"No. The captain owns this particular boat, and he will be wholly in charge of the actual operation of it, acting upon the orders of the commodore as to who is to go and when and where. Now it's all out and I'm glad of it. I——"

Mr. McCarthy's further words were unheard because of the cheer given by the Camp Girls, in which Mrs. Livingston and the guardians joined enthusiastically, much to the discomfiture of the guest, who half rose as though to run away. Evidently thinking better of it, he settled back in his seat and wiped his forehead.

Jane got up, and, running to her father, threw a pair of impulsive arms about his neck.

"Isn't he the darling Dad, though, girls?"

"He is," agreed the Chief Guardian.

"You won't think tho after we have all gone and drowned ourthelveth from thith—from the —what ith the name of the thhip on which we are going to thail the thalt water?"

"Her name is 'The Sister Sue,' " replied Mr. McCarthy.

"Thave me!" wailed Tommy. "The boat may be all right, but think of being drowned in a name like that! Now, if it wath 'The Queen of the Theath,' or thome thuch name ath that, I thouldn't so much mind being drowned in her, but 'The Thithter Thue'—thave uth!"

"You are not going to drown at all," laughed Miss Elting, "so don't begin to lay any plans in that direction."

"When is the boat coming here, Daddy?" questioned Jane.

"To-morrow morning early, if they have her ready in time. I told the owner to slap some new clothes on her, and make her presentable by to-morrow, sure. How do you like the idea, girls?"

"Oh, it's just too glorious for anything," cried Margery, now awakened to the possibilities of having a sailboat of their very own. Tommy regarded her quizzically, opened her mouth to speak, then closed her lips.

"What is it, dear?" questioned Miss Elting.

"It ith nothing now. Maybe I'll thay it when we get to thea, provided Buthter doeth not thay it for me."

"See here! We have forgotten all about that buried treasure," exclaimed Mr. McCarthy, at his ease once more after having escaped from the table. "Will you show me, Tommy?"

"No, thir. That ith a dark thecret."

"What, girls keep a secret?" scoffed the visitor.

"Don't you think they can?" demanded Tommy, squinting at him with one eye tightly closed.

"Never saw one that could."

"Then pleathe look at me."

"By the way, Mr. McCarthy," called Mrs. Livingston, "did you mention the name of our new captain, the one who owns and sails the boat?"

"That's so. I reckon I forgot that. He is known as Captain Bill. His real name, I believe, is Cummings."

"You are quite sure that he is all right, are you, Mr. McCarthy?"

"Has a reputation second to none among the Portsmouth skippers. I took care of that, knowing you were a lot of lone women and girls down here. I didn't see him personally. Took my

friend Lawyer Roberts's word for it, and what else I could pick up about the docks," added Mr. McCarthy. "But I must be thinking about getting back."

"Surely, Daddy, you are never going to think of walking back, are you?"

"Not I. I hear an automobile coming. I'm just going to get out to the road and beg a ride. They'll be keeping along on this road for at least ten miles and I can walk the rest of the way in, if I have to. In case I do not see you again, Mrs. Livingston, here's good-bye and good luck. I hope you all have a fine time with the boat. If that skipper doesn't obey orders, day or night, get a telegram to me instantly, and I'll bounce him right off. But don't let Jane send any telegrams. She'll break me, she's so long-winded——"

"Which I inherited," finished Crazy Jane. "Come on, girls; let's go out to the highway and see Dad off. We may have to watch him start off on foot."

They met the men who were coming to pull the automobile out of the ice pond. Mr. McCarthy gave them the additional job of towing the wrecked car to the nearest garage.

Mr. McCarthy was in luck. The automobile that they had heard approaching was a big power moving-van that had been down the

coast with a load of furniture for a city family who were moving into their summer home. The driver was willing to give Mr. McCarthy a lift, and a few moments later the contractor was bowling along the highway on his way to Portsmouth, thence on to his home at Meadow-Brook. The girls stood waving to him as long as the big car was in sight, he occasionally leaning out to wave back at them. They then retraced their steps to the camp, talking animatedly about the great treat in store for them—the sailboat with the homely name. They could scarcely contain themselves until the morrow, when the boat was to arrive. In the meantime everybody went over to examine the trail that Tommy Thompson had found. As she had said, it led into the woods and was there lost. Harriet showed them as nearly as possible where she had lain when the man stumbled over her, but search as they might they were unable to find a single trace of the box that had so mysteriously disappeared.

At supper that evening Mrs. Livingston advised the girls to say nothing to any one outside of their own companions regarding the strange proceeding. She explained that, by remaining silent on the subject, they might be able to learn more about it, and that perhaps some violation of the law might be at the bottom of it.

Early on the following morning all the girls

were up scanning the sea for a sail. A coasting schooner in the far distance, making up the coast, was the only boat in sight. The day was brilliant with sunshine, the sea blue and sparkling. The lookouts could see a long distance. The day passed and the night passed, but still no trace of their boat. Nor had the other mysterious craft paid another visit to the bay. At least, if it had, none of the campers had been awake at the time.

It was late that afternoon when some one raised a shout and pointed up the coast. There, about five miles away, was a tiny speck of white that they knew to be a sail. There seemed to be but a single sail, which told them that a small boat was carrying it. Then, again, the sail looked so white that they decided it must either be their boat or a private yacht cruising down the coast.

"It does look more like a yacht than the 'tub' that Mr. McCarthy described," said the Chief Guardian. "If this is the 'Sister Sue' she is a very trim little craft."

The beach was lined with Camp Girls eagerly watching the approaching sailboat, which was coming on at what seemed to them to be an aggravatingly slow rate of speed.

"What he needs is an engine," declared Jane. "Now, if he had that motor that's doubled up

under the car we ran into the ditch, he could make some time."

"That boat is sailing much faster than you think," answered Harriet. "You will see when it gets opposite us how fast it is moving. It is moving so fast that I can't make myself believe it is our boat."

"I gueth we'll wait till it getth here," decided Tommy, which voiced the feelings of all. As the sailboat drew down into plain view, exclamations of admiration were heard on all sides. For a single-masted boat she carried a great spread of white canvas and two jibs, each of which was full of wind, pulling powerfully. The wind being off shore, the sloop was heeling the other way, showing quite a portion of her black hull, which was in strong contrast with her glistening white sides and snowy sails. The water was spurting away from her bows, showing white along the black side below her water line—all in all, an inspiring sight to the lover of boats and the big water.

"Hurrah, see her go! She's skimming along like a scared cat. No, that isn't our tub, darlin's. I know Dad. She will be safe, but she will come limping and groaning down the line at a mile an hour, then probably go aground in the bay because there won't be room enough for her to turn about. You see if I'm not right."

"You are all wrong," answered Harriet. "How do I know? Never mind. You will find that you are." She had seen a man hauling in on the main sheets—the ropes that led from the mainsail back toward the cockpit. From that she knew the boat was preparing to change its course. This it did a few moments later, heading in toward the shore, but pointed at a spot a full half mile below the camp, as nearly as the girls could observe.

"Oh, that is too bad! See, they are going somewhere else," cried Miss Elting. "Why—why, what are they trying to do? Are those people crazy?"

"They are tacking in," answered Harriet.

"Of course. How stupid of me."

"It ith the 'Thilly Thue,' " shouted Tommy.

"The 'Silly Sue'! hurrah!" yelled the girls, instantly adopting Tommy's nickname for the boat.

"Oh, darlin's, isn't she the beauty?" cried Jane. She began dancing about, several others doing likewise.

"I thought you knew it was going to be an old tub," reminded Harriet teasingly.

"I take it all back. When I see Dad I shall get down on my knees and beg his pardon." Jane began running toward the bay, turning out to the bar as the most likely place to get a

good view of their present. She was followed by the entire camp, Chief Guardian and guardians, who ran shouting and waving their hats.

As the boat swept majestically into the bay the jibs came in and the mainsail was lowered slightly, the boom being permitted to swing far out. The girls then saw that there were two men on board, one handling the sails, the other was stationed at the wheel. The craft crossed and criss-crossed the bay, sawing back and forth several times before reaching a position for which the skipper evidently had been heading. Then, all at once, he swung the bow of the boat squarely into the wind.

"Let go!" he called.

The big sail came down with a clatter and rattle of rings, and the anchor went overboard with a loud splash. The "Sister Sue" was at anchor in the bay. The skipper lighted his pipe and sat down all hunched together, puffing away with most aggravating deliberateness.

"Aren't you coming ashore so we may get aboard and see the boat?" called Harriet.

"Bymeby," was the laconic answer.

"I am the commodore. I wish——"

"The what?"

"The commodore," answered Harriet, laughing so that she barely made herself heard.

"Commodore's quarters aren't ready,"

called back Captain Billy. "Let you know when we're ready for you. We aren't going out again to-day."

"I shall have to talk to the captain, I fear," said Mrs. Livingston, smiling faintly.

Soon after coming to anchor the second man on the boat was observed to be busy furling the sail, which he took his time in doing. This finished, he hauled up pails of water with a pail tied to the end of a rope and started swabbing down the decks. This completed, he went about other duties, which, to the row of girls sitting on the Lonesome Bar, seemed trivial and for the sake of killing time.

"Isn't it perfectly aggravating?" grumbled Margery Brown.

The supper horn blew while they still sat there waiting. The Camp Girls reluctantly turned back toward camp. They were disappointed, and so expressed themselves with emphasis while eating their supper. But Harriet, who had been excused before the others had finished, hurried out to take an observation. She was back almost at once.

"Their rowboat is coming ashore," she cried, pointing toward the bay.

Instantly every girl in the cook tent, without the formality of asking to be excused, pushed back her chair and dashed out. Mrs. Livingston

so far overlooked their breach of etiquette as to rush out with the rest of them.

"Come on, darlin's. They've come ashore for us at last. First there, first to go out. Go!"

It was a race for the landing place, with Harriet and Jane running side by side, Tommy Thompson following and gradually lessening the distance between them in a series of flying leaps. Tommy could run like a frightened fawn. Harriet heard her coming and increased her speed. Tommy gained no more on Harriet, though she arrived at their objective point by the side of Crazy Jane McCarthy.

"Ready to go out," announced the man. "But I can't take more than five at a time. Who goes first?"

Harriet halted sharply at sound of his voice, and gazed at the man perplexedly. His voice was strangely familiar, but, try as she would, she could not think where she had seen him.

CHAPTER XVIII

FIREWORKS FROM THE MASTHEAD

"WAIT for Mrs. Livingston," replied Harriet in answer to the man's question. "You are not the captain, are you?"

He shook his head. Mrs. Livingston came upon the scene. Harriet assisted her into the rowboat. The Chief Guardian directed the other Meadow-Brook girls to get in, telling the girls who were left on shore that they would be taken out to the "Sister Sue" as fast as possible, until there was no more room. The others would have their turn soon afterward.

If the girls had been pleased with the "Sister Sue" from a shore view, they were enthusiastic at what they saw when they got on board. The decks were white from scouring, the binnacle that held the compass shone with mirror-like brightness, ropes were neatly coiled and everywhere was the smell of fresh paint and the faint, salty odor of the deep sea.

The "Sue" was some forty feet in length over all, broad of beam, covered over about half her length amidships by a raised deck cabin, a cabin that rises above the deck a few inches with nar-

row windows on the two sides. Two doors from the cockpit led into the cabin. Into this the Meadow-Brook Girls hurried, after one quick look over the trim craft. They cried out for Mrs. Livingston to join them. The interior of the cabin was in white with plush seats on each side, the seats being broad and comfortable, affording lounging space for several persons at one time. A tank holding drinking water, at the forward end of the cabin, was the only other furnishing.

The "Sue" was far from palatial, but the Camp Girls thought they had never seen a neater or prettier boat, and as for its ability to sail, they had seen something of that as the sloop came into the bay.

Mrs. Livingston had remained outside to speak with the skipper. Harriet soon joined them. Captain Billy was a type. His grizzled, red beard was so near the color of his face that it was not easy to determine where the beard left off and the face began. Billy had a habit of avoiding one's eyes when speaking. Either he would be consulting the deck of the "Sue" or gazing at the sky. He was looking up at the clouds now.

"The captain says he can safely carry ten persons without crowding, Harriet," the Chief Guardian informed her. Then turning to the

captain, "This young lady has been placed in charge of the boat by Mr. McCarthy; of course, your judgment as to what is best for all concerned must prevail."

Captain Billy's whiskers bristled. He swept the Meadow-Brook Girl with a quick, measuring glance, then permitted his eyes to gaze upward again.

"I was going to suggest, Mrs. Livingston, that we first take you and the other guardians out for a sail, say to-morrow morning. I don't think the captain will wish to go out in the evening," said Harriet.

He shook his head.

"Certainly not," declared Mrs. Livingston. "And now, sir, what about your meals—the board for yourself and your man?"

"Get my own. He goes away early in the morning. Sleep on board, too. You needn't worry about me. Got any gear you want to get aboard?"

"Gear?" questioned the Chief Guardian blankly.

"Dunnage?" nodded the skipper. "Anything you want to bring aboard?" he shouted.

"No, thank you, nothing at present," answered Harriet.

"Man will fetch it off before he goes away if there is. Don't ask me to do any packing."

"Our young women are perfectly able to help themselves," replied Mrs. Livingston with dignity. "I suppose, however, that having only one rowboat you will come ashore for us whenever we wish to go out?" she added.

The captain shook his head. He was the most ungracious person they ever had known. But when Harriet said they had better get word to Mr. McCarthy at once, the captain changed his mind quickly. He said he would come for them whenever they gave him the word. He told them, further, that they would have to bring their own provisions when they went out for a sail, but that he could show them how to catch some fish if they desired to do so.

"We shall be ready to go out about ten o'clock to-morrow morning," Mrs. Livingston told him. "If there is anything you wish us to do, you might call to the young women who occupy the cabin there on the Lonesome Bar. I am very glad you are going to remain aboard your boat, for we are not equipped for putting up strangers. But if there is anything you wish in the way of supplies, do not hesitate to send word to me. We have quite a quantity. We are obliged to go beyond the highway for our drinking water, and it is a trifle brackish."

"Hadn't we better go ashore and give the others a chance to come out?" asked Harriet.

"You and I will remain here. The others may go," returned Mrs. Livingston.

Several boatloads of excited girls were put aboard the "Sister Sue." The girls were enthusiastic; they chattered and sang and made merry, Captain Billy growing more taciturn and sour as the moments passed. Finally, Mrs. Livingston said they must put off further visiting of the boat until morning; that night was now upon them. They bade good night to Captain Billy, and his man put them ashore, Mrs. Livingston leaving the sloop last.

"He is a queer character," she declared after joining Harriet on the beach later on. "What do you make of him?"

"I suppose he is like many of his calling, gruff and of few words. But there is something beyond that which I can't quite make out."

"What do you mean? Do you think that he is untrustworthy?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Livingston. I do know that I dislike him. Isn't that silly in me?" asked the girl laughingly. "I have no confidence in him."

"I think you are in error. Mr. McCarthy would not send us a man who was not trustworthy in every way. He is supposed to be a skillful skipper, and from my observation I know he will behave himself, so we don't care

what he is beyond that. Shall you go back to the camp with us, or direct to the cabin?"

"To camp."

The girls sat about the campfire, singing the songs of the Camp Girls until ten o'clock that evening, after which the Meadow-Brook party bade good night to their companions and strolled down to the bar, thence out to the cabin. All were keenly alive to the pleasures that awaited them on the following day, when they were to have their first sail in the "Sister Sue."

Harriet made ready for bed with her companions, but she was not sleepy. She lay on her bough bed near the door, where she remained wide awake, thinking over the occurrences of the past few days. A sound out on the bay, as if something had dropped to the deck of the sloop, attracted her attention. The girl crawled from her bed and out to the front of the cabin on all fours. She then sat up, leaning her back against the cabin; shading her eyes, she gazed off at the boat riding easily in the bay.

The "Sue" was faintly outlined in the dim light of the night, but the night was too dark to enable the girl to make out anything in detail, nor was there a sound on board to indicate that any one was awake.

"It may be that the captain is putting his man ashore, or else has just returned from doing so.

Still, this seems to me a pretty late hour to be sending any one ashore." Harriet thought she could now make out the small boat floating astern of the "Sue," where it was ordinarily kept, though she could not be certain of this. "Ah! There is something going on over there."

The faint creak of block and tackle reached her listening ears, which she strained and strained, even closing her eyes that she might concentrate wholly on the sense of hearing. The creaking continued for a couple of minutes, then ceased altogether.

"I wonder if the captain can be making sail to go out?" Harriet asked herself, opening wide her eyes and gazing toward the sloop. But the latter was riding lazily on the gentle swell as before, the girl being unable to make out anything that looked like the sail. She thought she surely would be able to see the sail, had it been hoisted.

Something was dropped on the deck, making a great clatter, then for several minutes all was silent on board the "Sister Sue." Harriet could not imagine what was going on there. After a time there were further evidences of activity on board; noises, faint, it is true, which indicated that something out of the ordinary was taking place on the boat. Harriet wondered if she had not better call Miss Elting and have her listen, too. Upon second thought, however, she de-

cided not to do so. In the first place she could see and hear fully as much as could the guardian, besides which, were she to awaken the guardian, the other girls undoubtedly would be disturbed. They might make a noise that would prevent her learning what was being done on board the sloop.

Harriet shivered, for she was in her kimono, while the breeze blowing in from the sea was fresh and penetrating. She felt a sneeze coming. The girl made heroic efforts to repress the sneeze, then, finding she could not, stuffed an end of her kimono into her mouth and covered her nose with both hands.

It was a long, shuddering sneeze that Harriet Burrell uttered. She feared it had not only attracted the attention of the man or men on board the sloop, but awakened her companions as well. The faint noises on deck continued as before. No sound came from the cabin.

"Thank goodness, no one heard me," she muttered. "Why is it that one has to sneeze when she doesn't want to, I wonder? I——" She started at sound of a low voice close at hand speaking her name.

"Harriet, ith that you?"

"Tommy, what a start you gave me! When did you wake up? What are you doing here?" questioned Harriet in a whisper.

"That ith what I wath going to athk you. What ith it?"

"Sh-h-h! You will waken the others."

"If you didn't wake them up with that thneeze nothing but a club will wake them." Tommy crept close to her companion. "You thee thomething, don't you?"

"Not much. The night is too dark. I can see the outlines of the 'Sue' over there, but that is about all."

"Ith anything the matter with her?"

"I think not."

"Then why are you watching her tho clothely?"

"You are altogether too observant, Tommy. But don't speak so loudly, please. There is nothing of any importance over there. Please go back to bed. You will complain about having to get up for breakfast in the morning."

"Did you ever hear me complain about having to eat?"

"I can't say that I ever did," smiled Harriet. "But you will catch cold out here."

"Tho will you. You will catch cold firtht becauthe you have been out here longer than I have. Anything elthe?"

"No, except that I am not going to waste my breath giving you advice. When you become cold enough I presume you will go back to bed."

"Yeth, when I find out what ith going on out here. I won't catch cold, but maybe if I thtay out here long enough I'll catch a fithh. There! I know what you are watching. You are watching that 'Thilly Thue.'"

"Sh-h-h!"

The creaking on board had begun again. It continued at intervals for several moments, both girls listening almost breatlessly.

"Wha—at are they doing?" whispered Tommy.

"I don't know. That is what I am trying to find out."

"My grathiouth! Maybe the captain is going to run away with the 'Thilly Thue'."

"No. Come to think of it, I believe he must be getting the boat ready for our sail to-morrow."

"Not without a light. There ith thomething else going on. Oh, look!"

Following a period of silence, blue sparks began sputtering from the masthead of the "Sister Sue." The girls could hear the sparks crackle and snap spitefully.

"Oh, look at the fireworkth!" cried Tommy out loud. "The thhip ith on fire!"

Harriet laid a firm hand on her arm. "Keep still!"

A faint squealing sound was now distinguish-

able, while the sparking at the masthead continued with almost rhythmic regularity.

"I know! I know what it is!" gasped Harriet excitedly. "Listen, Tommy, listen. Don't you know?"

CHAPTER XIX

SAILING THE BLUE WATER

"NO, I don't know what it ith. If I did, I thhouldn't be athking you," answered Grace. "It ith either lightning, fireworkth or a real fire."

"It is wireless, Tommy. Don't you know now?"

Grace shook her head.

"Didn't you ever hear a wireless machine work?"

"No; but there ithn't any wireleth on the 'Thilly Thue,' ith there?"

"I—I don't know. I mean, I did not see any when we were out there to-day. I don't understand it. What can he be doing with wireless so late at night?"

"Maybe he ith telegraphing home to find out if the folkth are all right," suggested Tommy.

Harriet did not smile. Her face was very grave, her forehead wrinkled in thought. For

the greater part of an hour, with brief intervals between, the wireless on the sloop continued, the sparks at the masthead sputtering and snapping with marked regularity. Had Harriet Burrell understood a little more of telegraphy she would have known, though unable to read the dots and dashes, that the operator was calling some one who did not answer. After a long time he apparently gave it up, for the sparking at the masthead ceased suddenly, followed by a brief period of silence on board, then the creaking of block and tackle was renewed. This was followed by a subdued thumping and rattling about on deck, this lasting only a few moments. The "riding light"—a light hung from the stern of the boat—was hung out, a dim light appeared in the cabin, which after a time was extinguished, then silence settled over the sloop for the night.

"That is all for to-night, I think," said Harriet aloud, but in a low voice. "I do not know what it is all about, Tommy, but I do know that something queer is going on here. Do you think you and I will be able to solve the mystery?"

"I think tho. Don't you?"

"I do. This makes two mysteries for us to solve, one the finding of that mysterious box and the other the mystery of the wireless on the 'Sister Sue.' I would suggest that you don't

say a word about it to any one to-morrow. Don't ask any questions, either—leave that to me—but keep your eyes open while you are on board. Perhaps we may discover something that we overlooked there to-day. Wireless on the 'Sister Sue'! I don't understand it at all. Be very careful that you do not wake up the others when you go in. Make sure that you don't fall over a cot and startle the girls."

"Yeth, I'll be careful."

Harriet remained outside while Grace was getting herself back to bed, but the former darted in quickly upon hearing a crash in the cabin, followed by a scream from Margery. Tommy had stumbled against Buster's bed and fallen across it and on the sleeping stout girl. But Harriet, knowing it would not do for the girls to know that two of their number had been mooning out-of-doors, darted into her own cot, and before they realized that she had just got in, was sitting up in bed demanding to know what all the disturbance was about.

"Tommy, have you been walking in your sleep?" demanded Miss Elting.

"Yeth, I've been walking, I gueth. Excuthe me, Buthter. If you hadn't been in my way I wouldn't have fallen over you. Good night, friendth." Tommy tumbled into bed, muttering to herself. Harriet did not go to sleep at once.

She lay for some little time thinking over the strange occurrences of the night, and wondering what it could mean. Then, her companions having gone to sleep, she too settled down for the few hours that remained before the rising horn blew.

Her first thought, upon awakening in the morning, was for the sloop. Quickly scrambling out of bed, she stepped to the door and gazed out on the bay. The "Sister Sue" lay at her anchorage motionless, glistening in the bright rays of the morning sunlight, handsomer, Harriet thought, as she stood admiring the pretty craft, than she had appeared on the previous day.

The Camp Girls were filled with expectations of what was before them. They were to sail shortly after ten o'clock, and for many of them it was to be the first sail they had ever enjoyed. Breakfast was eaten and the camp put in order in record time that morning. Promptly at ten o'clock Captain Billy rowed the small boat ashore. He dragged down some trees which he cut, thus making a crude pier for the girls to walk out on, thus enabling him to leave the small boat in deeper water. However, he could take out no more than five passengers at a time. Mrs. Livingston told him that they did not care to sail far that morning. It was her purpose to

give each of the girls in the camp a sail that day. Several trips, therefore, would be necessary.

"If that's the case, we can take a bigger load on the sloop," replied the captain. "Pile 'em in."

"Will it be perfectly safe?" questioned the Chief Guardian.

"You can't sink her. The reason I didn't want a big crowd was that I thought you would be going out a long way. We're likely to meet heavy weather several miles outside. In that case a skipper wants plenty of room to move about. Sometimes quick work is necessary, and——"

"I don't suppose that being a commodore will prevent my assisting in sailing the boat, will it?" asked Harriet smilingly.

The skipper looked her over critically.

"I reckon we can make a sailor of you. Know anything about sailing?"

"No, sir."

"Yeth, she doeth," interjected Grace. "She wath the captain of the 'Red Rover' latht year."

"And sunk it," chuckled Crazy Jane.

"If you will tell me what to do, I shall be glad to start, Captain."

"All right. Get hold of that halyard and see if you can haul the sail up," he answered, grinning mischievously. Captain Billy had not the

least idea that she possessed the strength to raise the sail. But Harriet surprised him. She grasped the rope, and, though so light that the weight of the sail nearly pulled her off her feet, she hauled it slowly but steadily to the peak, then, throwing all her weight into one hand and arm, made the halyard fast to a cleat on the deck.

"Is that right, sir?" she asked, her face slightly flushed from the exertion.

"Great boomers, but you have muscle in your arms!" wondered the skipper. "Now, please hold this wheel just where it is; I'll take in the anchor. The man went back home last night. Don't need him with all these strong-arm ladies on board. We'll be under way in a few minutes now. I—— Look out there!"

A sudden though slight puff of wind struck the mainsail, sending the sloop ahead directly toward the shore. But without waiting for orders Harriet sprang to the wheel, pointing the bow of the sloop, that had heeled dangerously, right toward the wind that was blowing in from the sea.

"Fine!" shouted the captain, shipping the anchor and scrambling back to the cockpit as the sloop settled down on an even keel again, the squall drumming on the ropes and stays. "You've sailed a boat before, young lady."

"Nothing more than a canoe and a house boat."

"You've got the instinct, just the same. I'll have you sailing this 'Sister Sue' before you're a week older, and sailing it as well as I could sail it myself. Where do you wish to go?" turning inquiringly to Mrs. Livingston.

"Up and down the coast, not far out."

The skipper tacked back and forth a couple of times to clear the bay, then laid his course diagonally away from the coast. The day was an ideal one, the sloop lay well over and steadily gained headway as she forged ahead with white water spurting away from her bows.

"Gul-lor-ious!" cried Margery.

"Love-a-ly!" mocked Crazy Jane.

Tommy eyed Buster quizzically.

"Yeth, but thith ithn't the real thea. You will be singing inthide inthtead of outthide when we get out on the real othean. It won't be tho gul-lor-iouth then."

"All we need now to make us a real ship is a wireless machine," said Harriet, with apparent innocence.

The skipper shot a quick look at her from under his heavy red eyebrows, but Harriet's face was guileless.

"Would it not be possible to put a wireless outfit on a boat of this kind, Captain?"

"Yes, if you wanted to. But what good would it do you?"

"I don't know, except that we might talk with ships far out at sea—ships that we could not see at all. Why don't you put a wireless machine on your little ship? I think that would be fine," persisted the Meadow-Brook girl, with feigned enthusiasm. The skipper growled an unintelligible reply and devoted himself to sailing his boat. Then Tommy took up the subject, discussing wireless telegraphy with great confidence, but in an unscientific manner that would have brought groans of anguish from one familiar with the subject.

Harriet Burrell through all of this conversation had been watching the skipper without appearing to do so. That he was ill at ease she saw by the scowl that wrinkled his forehead, but otherwise there was no sign to indicate that their talk had disturbed him.

They sailed for two hours, then the sloop returned to the bay, where most of the girls were put ashore and another lot taken aboard. The Meadow-Brook Girls and Mrs. Livingston remained on board. Harriet, during the time the captain was engaged in assisting his passengers over the side, where they were rowed ashore by Jane and Hazel, looked over the "Sister Sue" with more care than she had done before. There

was nothing that she could discover that looked like a wireless apparatus. However, at the forward end of the cabin she discovered a small door let into the paneling. This door was locked. She asked the captain to what it opened.

"That's the chain locker, where we stow things," he answered gruffly.

The girl then began calculating on how much space there was under the floor of the cabin. She decided that there must be at least three feet of hull under there, but the flooring was covered with carpet that extended under the lockers and seats at the side, so that she was unable to determine whether or not the floor could be readily taken up. Altogether, her discoveries did not amount to very much. She was obliged to confess as much to herself. As for Tommy, that young woman had conducted herself admirably during the sail, proving that she was discreet and fully as keen as was Harriet Burrell; and, though Tommy said very little on the subject uppermost in the minds of the two girls, the little girl was constantly on the alert.

In the joy of sailing they forgot their noon meal. Nor were they reminded of it when Captain Bill, giving Harriet the wheel, made himself a cup of black coffee over an oil stove and drank it, eating several slices of dry bread.

Harriet Took the Wheel.

Having finished his luncheon, he pointed to the compass, asking Harriet if she knew anything about it. She said she did not.

"If you are going to be a sailor, you must learn to read the compass," he said. "In the first place, you must learn to 'box the compass.' I'll show you."

"Are you looking for the boxth?" questioned Tommy, observing the skipper searching for something in a locker under the stern seat.

"Box? No," he grunted. "We don't use that kind of a box in boxing the compass. By boxing the compass we mean reading the points of it." He produced a long, stiff wire, with which he pointed to the compass card. "A mariner's compass is divided into thirty-two points," he informed Harriet. "In the first place, there are four cardinal points, North, East, South and West. As you will see, by looking at the compass card, it is divided into smaller points which are not named on the card. I'll draw you a card to-night with all the points named, then you can learn them. Until you do, you are not a sailor. For instance, to read the compass, we begin with North and go on until we have completed the circle of the card, naming each point and sub-division as we go along. Then you should learn to read it backward as well. After you have learned to do

that I will show you how to lay a course by a chart."

"I don't thee anything to read," said Tommy, squinting down at the card.

"You are not taking the lesson, darlin'," Jane reminded her.

"This is the way to begin," Captain Billy told them. "First is North. Then you say north one-quarter, one-half, three-quarters, then the next subdivision is North by East with the same fractions of degrees. We go on as you will see by following the card, as follows, North Northeast; Northeast by North; Northeast; Northeast by East; East Northeast; East by North; East. You proceed in exactly the same manner with the other cardinal points, East, South and West, and that is what is called 'boxing the compass.' Do you think you understand, Miss Burrell?"

"I have at least a start," replied Harriet smilingly.

"I haven't," declared Tommy with emphasis. "I couldn't thpeak at all if I repeated that awful thtuff."

In the meantime Harriet was gazing steadily at the card, fixing the points in mind, really photographing the points of the compass and their sub-divisions on her memory, the skipper observing her with a dry smile. He thought he had

given the young sailor a problem that would keep her busy for some days to come. What was his surprise, therefore, when just after they had come to anchor, Harriet asked him to hear her lesson. She began boxing the compass and only once did she pause until she had gone all the way around the card.

"How near right was I, Captain?" she asked.

"Right as a plumb line. Girl, you're a wonder. Took me four months to learn to read the card; then I didn't have it down as fine as you have. Will you forget it before to-morrow morning?"

"Oh, dear me, no," she laughed. "I hope I shall not," added the girl, sobering a little. "I shall write the points down as soon as possible after I get back to camp."

"If you have it down fine in the morning, I'll take you for a long sail to-morrow," promised the captain, as he assisted the girls over the side into the waiting small boat.

The Wau-Wau girls voted it the most delightful day they ever had spent. When they had reached camp, however, Harriet heard something that caused her to think even more seriously of what already had happened at Camp Wau-Wau. Before the night was over she was to witness that which would add still further to her perplexity.

CHAPTER XX

OUT OF SIGHT OF LAND

"THE man wished to know to whom the boat out in the bay belonged," Miss Elting was saying to the Chief Guardian. "He did not give his name, but asked many questions—who the captain is, where we got him and how, and all about it. The questioner was very mysterious. What do you suppose he could have been trying to find out?"

"Perhaps he was a police officer looking for a stolen boat. I understand a great many boats are stolen along this coast. But we do not have to worry in the present instance. Miss McCarthy's father would not have given us a man who was not right in every way."

"Oh, no," answered Miss Elting. "He seemed perfectly satisfied with what I told him, but he did spend quite a time strolling up and down the beach, out beyond the bar."

Harriet had overheard the conversation between Miss Elting and Mrs. Livingston. She smiled at the thought of the light she might possibly shed on the inquiry made by the visitor that afternoon.

The girls were sleepy that night and retired

early, all save Harriet Burrell and Tommy, who asked permission to sit out on the bar in front of the cabin, which permission Miss Elting readily granted. But Tommy soon grew weary and stumbled into the cabin, where she floundered about sleepily until she had awakened everyone of her companions.

Soon after the camp had settled down Harriet was conscious of a renewal of the previous night's activity on board the sloop, and in due time the wireless sparks began sputtering from the aerials at the masthead.

They had hardly begun when they abruptly ceased. Her ears caught the sound of the anchor chain scraping through the hawse-hole. The anchor came aboard with a clatter, the mainsail was sent to the peak in short order, the boom swung over and the big sail caught the faint breeze that drifted in from the sea. The sloop, to her amazement, moved out from the bay. No sooner had it cleared the land than a fresh ocean breeze heeled the boat down, sending it rapidly out to sea, where it soon disappeared, sailing without any lights whatever, even the riding light having been taken in before the captain had started out.

"What can it mean?" wondered Harriet Burrell. "I know something questionable is going on here, but what is it?"

There was no answer to the question. The tide was now booming on the beach and a fresher breeze was springing up, the wind outside having veered until it blew directly into the cove. The girl waited for the return of the "Sister Sue" until long after midnight, then went to bed. The sky had become overcast and a spattering of raindrops smote her in the face. The prospect was for a drizzly night.

When the camp awakened next morning the sloop was at her anchorage. What time she had come in Harriet had not the slightest idea, but it must have been early in the morning, because the skipper was just furling the mainsail as the girl emerged from the cabin. The sail was so soaked that he had difficulty in bending it to the boom to which he was trying to house it. But Harriet Burrell said nothing of her discovery at breakfast that morning. Later in the day she confided the secret to Tommy. The latter twisted her face, grimaced and winked wisely. The two girls understood each other.

Captain Bill did not mention having been out with the boat, though Harriet gave him an excellent opportunity to do so that same day. A drenching drizzle fell all day long. Of course, this did not interfere with the camp work. The Camp Girls never ceased their labors for rain or storm of any kind. Later on in the day the

Meadow-Brook Girls went aboard the sloop with their guardian, principally for the reason that Harriet wished to take further lessons in seamanship. She had learned her compass card well and earned the praise of the grizzled old skipper, but she was ambitious to accomplish greater things.

Several days passed, during which the drizzle scarcely ceased for a moment. But during all this time the young woman was not idle, so far as her new interests were concerned. She had asked questions, inquiring the names of things and their uses until she knew them intimately. The ropes and stays, from a mass of complex, meaningless cordage, had resolved themselves into individual units, each of which had its use and its purpose; the compass was no longer a mystery, and, during a lull in the drizzle, when the sun had come out on the fifth day, Harriet was permitted to take an observation with the sextant, the instrument with which mariners take sights to determine their positions at sea.

Harriet was instructed to catch the sun at its zenith, which she did, noting the figures on the scale of the sextant and from which, under the instruction of the captain, she figured out the latitude of the sloop. He allowed her to do all the figuring herself. The result was startling. The skipper took her calculations, studied

them, frowned, then permitted his face to expand into a wrinkled grin.

"Young lady, did you think this was Noah's Ark?" he demanded.

"No, sir. Wh—y?"

"Because according to your figures the 'Sister Sue' is at this minute located on a line with Mt. Washington, off yonder in the White Range."

Harriet flushed to the roots of her hair as her companions shouted gleefully. At last Harriet Burrell had found something that she could not do. But the captain quickly informed them that to be able to take observations accurately, and then figure them out, required long and close application. Some mariners never were really good at theoretical navigation. Nor had Harriet, as yet, mastered the principles of trigonometry, which branch of mathematics underlies navigation.

On the following morning the sun came out, and by the time the camp was awake the mainsails and jibs had been put out to dry. They were permitted to swing free all day long and by nightfall were dry and white, ready for the next sail. Captain Billy had promised them a long sail, though not having told them where. That evening he consulted with the Chief Guardian in her tent, with the result that the Meadow-Brook

Girls, Miss Elting and five of their companions were told to prepare themselves for an early departure on the following morning, provided the day were fair.

The girls were delighted, especially Harriet, who looked forward to putting into actual practice the theories that she had learned. A full day's provisions were put aboard, for these long sails could not be made on schedule time in every instance. An early breakfast was eaten by those who were to go on the sail, after which, bidding good-bye to their companions who remained behind, the sailing party set out for the beach, where Captain Billy was awaiting them with the small boat. The passengers were put aboard in two loads, Harriet and Crazy Jane in the first boat. The two girls set the jibs, which they had in place by the time the skipper returned with the others of the sailing party. They then hoisted the mainsail, and were under way a very few minutes after the party was snugly aboard. The "Sister Sue" sailed out of the bay to the accompaniment of fluttering handkerchiefs from the shore and shrill cries of good-bye.

"I'll thend you a pothtal card from Europe," shouted Tommy.

The "Sue" dipped and heeled under the fresh breeze, and, with a "bone in her teeth"—a white

bar of foam at her bows—reached for the open sea.

"Take the wheel," ordered the skipper, nodding at Harriet. "Don't move it much except to fill your sails. See that the sails are full and pulling strongly at all times, and watch the weather for squalls. When the sails are pulling too strong, point the nose closer into the wind, but the 'Sue' will stand up under more than an ordinary squall. That's it."

"She is a splendid boat!" cried Harriet.

"She is at least a well-balanced boat," answered Captain Billy. "Having the wind on the quarter, we do not have to tack any on this course. You see, we are headed Northeast by East three-quarters. Keep her there."

"Were I to keep straight on as I am, where would we land?" asked Harriet.

"England."

"Oh, let uth keep right on until we get to England," piped Tommy. "How far ith it?"

"Three thousand miles, more or less," replied the skipper.

"Thave me!"

She had followed the skipper forward, where he had gone to change the set of one of the jibs, Tommy watching him with questioning eyes.

"There wath a man at the camp the other day," began the little lisping girl.

"A man? What did he want in your camp?"

"He wath athking quethtionth about you and the boat," replied Tommy innocently.

"Eh?" The skipper's filmy blue eyes took on a steely glint. "Asking about me?"

"Yeth."

"What did he want to know?"

"All about you."

"Did he say what for?" Captain Billy showed more excitement in his manner than Tommy ever before had seen him exhibit.

"No, not that I know of. He athked the guardianth about you, tho I heard, where we got you and who got you. Why do you thuppothe he wanted to know all of thothe thingth?" questioned the little girl, here eyes wide, questioning and innocent.

"I don't know, Miss. Forget it."

"Do you thuppothe it hath anything to do with the 'Thilly Thue' going out in the night?"

Captain Billy gripped the sheet that he was wrapping about a cleat, his red face took on a deeper shade, his eyes grew menacing. But Tommy refused to see anything threatening in either attitude or gaze. She chuckled gleefully.

"Oh, I can keep a thecret. I haven't told anything, have I?" laughed Tommy as she ran back to her companions, her eyes bright and sparkling. "I made him thit up and notithe

thingth,'' she chuckled in Harriet's ear. ''You watch him, and thee how mad he lookth when he cometh back here.''

The expression on the face of the skipper bore out all that Tommy had said of him. Harriet rebuked her, and demanded to know what she had said, but Tommy laughed merrily and ran into the cabin.

The ''Sue'' was getting well out to sea now. The shore line was sinking gradually into the sea. The land had become a faint, purplish blur in the distance, a strong, salty breeze was blowing across the sloop and the Atlantic rollers were becoming longer. The ''Sue'' was beginning to roll heavily, rising and falling to the accompaniment of creaking boom, rattling mast rings and flapping jibs. Keeping on one's feet was becoming more and more difficult with the passing of the moments.

''Oh, help!'' moaned Margery, in an anguished voice.

''What ith the matter?'' demanded Tommy, squinting quizzically at her companion, whose face was deathly pale.

''Oh, I'm so ill,'' moaned Buster. Then she toppled over into the cockpit, where she lay moaning. Miss Elting and Hazel picked her up, carried her into the cabin and placed her on one of the cushioned locker seats. Margery

promptly rolled off with the next lurch of the sloop. "I wish I were dead!" she moaned.

"Cheer up! The wortht ith yet to come," cooed Tommy.

"Do you think this is perfectly safe?" questioned Miss Elting, after having staggered outside. "The sea is very rough and we are a long way from shore."

"Not at all, Miss," replied the captain. "This is a very fine sea. Why, this boat could go through a hurricane and never leak a drop. You see, we are taking no water aboard at all. Where will you find a boat as dry as this, I'd like to know?"

Thus reassured, the guardian felt better about their situation, though she began to feel dizzy and a few moments later was forced to join Margery in the cabin. Buster was still on the cabin floor, unable to keep on the locker seat. She was tossing from side to side with every roll of the sloop. Four other girls from the camp by this time had sought what comfort was to be had in the cabin. Outside, Jane, Harriet, Tommy, Hazel and the skipper were taking their full measure of the enjoyment of the hour. Harriet got out a basket of food, and, bracing herself against the combing, proceeded to eat. Her companions on deck joined her. Tommy carried a roast beef sandwich into the cabin.

"Have a nithe, fat thandwitch with me?" she asked.

Dismal groans greeted her invitation. Harriet called her back.

"You shouldn't have done that, Tommy," she rebuked. "It was most unkind of you. How would you like to be aggravated if you were seasick?"

"If I got theathick I'd detherve to be teathed. Oh, thee the gullth."

A flock of white gulls was circling over the "Sister Sue." Harriet flung overboard a handful of crumbs, whereat the birds swooped down, rode the swells and greedily picked up the crumbs. They started up and soon overtook the sloop. For an hour the girls fed them; then, the crumbs being exhausted, the gulls soared out to sea in search of other craft and food.

For some time the sailing party had been so fully engaged with their own affairs that they had given little thought to their surroundings. They now began to look about them.

"The land has disappeared!" cried Harriet. "We are out of sight of land. Isn't this splendid? How far are we out from home, Captain?"

"Nearly forty miles," he answered, after consulting the log. "Want to go back?"

"Oh, no! Let's keep on going. How I wish we could keep on forever in this way."

"We will go on until we meet a ship that is due here."

"A ship! Oh, where?" cried the girls.

The captain pointed a gnarled finger at a faint smudge on the distant horizon.

"Yonder she is," he answered. "Shall we go out and meet her?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" shouted the Meadow-Brook Girls gleefully. He changed the course of the "Sister Sue" ever so little, and they went bowling along over the Atlantic rollers headed for the big liner that was approaching them at nearly thirty miles an hour.

CHAPTER XXI

AN ANXIOUS OUTLOOK

"COME out, girlth, and thee the thhip," shouted Tommy, poking her head into the cabin.

"Go away and don't bother me," groaned Margery. "Can't you see how sick I am?"

"Ithn't that too bad?" deplored Tommy, withdrawing her face with a most unsympathetic grin. All those on deck were watching the black smudge on the horizon, and as they gazed it grew into a great, dark cloud. Out of the cloud, after a time, they saw white foam flashing

in the sunlight, caused by the displacement of the great ship as she forged through the summer seas.

"Shall we pass near her?" questioned Miss Elting.

"We're right on her course," replied the skipper. "We'll turn out soon, for she won't shift her position an inch unless she thinks we're going to run into her. Let your boat off a point to starboard, Miss Burrell."

"Aye, aye," answered Harriet promptly, shifting the wheel slightly, eyes fixed on the trembling compass card. The shift of position threw the wind directly abeam. It was now blowing squarely against the quarter, causing the sloop to heel down at a sharp angle. The boat fairly leaped forward, her lee rail almost buried in a smother of foam. The eyes of the girl at the wheel sparkled with pleasure. It was glorious. Harriet Burrell could not remember to have enjoyed a happier moment.

"They are watching us," announced the captain, who had been examining the oncoming ship through his glass. "They think we may be coming out to speak to them," he added with a chuckle.

"We don't thpeak thhipth in the daylight," answered Tommy, drawing a quick glance from the captain. Harriet gave her a warning look,

then devoted her attention to steering the course, glancing at the oncoming ship every now and then.

"Swing out," directed Captain Billy. "She throws a heavy swell. We will cut across it at right angles passing under her stern. I'll tell you when to swing in so we'll just make it. Now, can you see the people?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the girls.

The huge red and black funnels belching clouds of dense black smoke were now plainly visible, as were the towering upperworks of the ship, and the bridge high in the air.

"Swing in," commanded the "Sue's" skipper.

Harriet put the helm hard over. The sloop responded quickly. Now the spray dashed over the boat in a drenching shower, bringing shouts of glee from the Meadow-Brook Girls. The move in a few minutes brought them so close to the big ship that the girls could look into the fresh sea-blown faces of the passengers who crowded the rails on that side of the liner. It seemed as if the sloop must crash into the side of the larger boat. Harriet glanced inquiringly at Captain Billy, who nodded encouragingly, from which she understood that there was no cause for alarm.

The girls were now waving their handker-

chiefs and shouting to the amazed passengers, who could not understand why a party in so frail a craft should be met with far out to sea, how far few of those on the ship knew. They did know that they were out of sight of land, which made the marvel all the greater.

"Point in closer," commanded Captain Billy.

Harriet swung in still more. The "Sister Sue" buried her nose in the foamy, eddying wake of the liner close under the counter, so close, in fact, that the girls could see the water boiling over the twin propellers and hear their beat. The next moment they had passed her and were on the open, rolling sea again, with the big ship threshing her way toward New York, rapidly widening the gap between herself and the venturesome little craft. For the moment that they had been blanketed by the steamer their sails had flattened and they had lost headway, but now the wind picked them up, the sails bellied and the little sloop continued on her way.

"We must turn now," said the skipper, consulting the skies, which he swept with a comprehensive glance. He gave Harriet the return course. "I fear we are going to lose the wind. It will pick up later, however. No need to be anxious." He stepped inside the cabin and, leaning forward, consulted the barometer. Harriet noted that his face wore a look of anxiety

for the moment. But it had entirely disappeared when he returned to the deck. Once more he swept the horizon.

"How is the glass?" she asked, but in a voice too low for her companions to hear. Harriet referred to the barometer.

"It has fallen over an inch in two hours," answered Captain Billy.

"That is a big drop, isn't it?"

"I should say so. But don't say anything to the others," he added, with a quick glance at the girls to see if any had overheard either his or Harriet Burrell's remarks.

"It means a blow, does it not?"

"Yes. But it may be a long way off, possibly a hundred miles or more."

"Then, again, we may be right in the center of it?" she questioned.

The skipper nodded again.

"Is there anything to be done?"

"Nothing except to make all the time we can and keep a weather eye aloft and abroad. Watch your sails and trim them for every breath of air. Jockey her. Now is your time to see what can be done when there is little wind to be had."

Harriet was getting practical experience in sailing a boat such as falls to few novices, but she took to the work like one who had long been used to the sea and its varying moods. Under

her skilful manipulation the "Sister Sue" was making fairly good headway, though nothing like what she had done on the outward voyage, for the wind was dying out, becoming more fitful, shifting from one point of the compass to another.

"When the wind moves opposite to the direction of the hands of a clock—what seamen call 'against the clock'—look out for foul weather," the captain informed her.

"That is the way it is going now, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I hope we shall have enough to take us home."

"We may have too much." Once more the skipper studied the horizon to the northeast. That he was not pleased with his observation Harriet was confident. Again he took a long look at the barometer, glanced at the compass to see that she was on her course, then, thrusting his hands into his pockets, studied the rigging overhead.

"We aren't making much headway, are we?" questioned Miss Elting.

"None at all," was the, to her, surprising reply; "we're in a dead calm now."

The waves had taken on an oily appearance and there were no longer white crests on the rollers. The "Sister Sue" rolled and plunged

in a sickening way, the boom swinging from side to side. All hands were in the cockpit or cabin, however, so that there was no danger of their being hit by the swinging boom. In the cabin was heard a series of groans more agonized than before. The guardian had recovered in a measure, though they observed that she was very pale. The fresh air outside revived her somewhat.

"I wish you to tell me frankly if there is any danger?" she demanded.

"Not yet," was the skipper's evasive answer.

"Meaning that there may be later?"

"We may be late getting home," he replied. "I can't say any more than that now. Ugh!"

Harriet Burrell saw him gazing off to the northeast. She followed the direction of his glance, and saw a purplish haze hanging heavily on the horizon. As she gazed the purple haze seemed to grow darker and to increase in size. The sight disturbed her, though she did not know why. The sea now made little noise. A flock of seagulls could be plainly heard honking high overhead, and a chattering flock of stormy petrels soared down, coming to rest on the water in the wake of the sloop.

"I'll take in the jibs. Mind your wheel. We are in for a blow," announced the skipper.

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE GRIP OF MIGHTY SEAS

THE captain quickly furled the jibs, then took a reef in the mainsail. Consulting the skies again, he decided to leave one of the jibs up, so set it once more and took another reef in the mainsail, thus shortening the latter considerably.

The "Sister Sue" was now making no headway at all, but was rolling dizzily from wave to wave, now and then a swell striking the side of the little boat and tumbling torrents of green water over into the cockpit. The girls were set to work bailing. They already were soaked to the skin, though, instead of being disturbed, they were laughing joyously, thinking it great fun. Their attention was called to a school of porpoises that came leaping toward them, appearing at first like miniature geysers springing out of the oily green seas. The porpoises divided, passing on either side of the sloop and close aboard, racing on toward the land that lay off yonder somewhere in the green distance.

It was now impossible to stand without holding fast to something that would not give. Harriet had never seen a boat roll so fast. From

side to side it lurched, plunging at the same time, both with almost incredible speed. Her own head was beginning to spin. Tommy's face was pale.

"You're getting seasick," smiled Harriet, eyeing her friend sharply.

"No, I'm not," protested the little girl "You're getting thick yourthelf."

"I confess to being dizzy," admitted Harriet, "but I am not so ill that I must go to bed. Keep outside. You will be much better off than in the cabin, where the air is close and the others are suffering."

"I'm going to, thank you." Tommy stood braced against the cabin, her keen little eyes observing the now serious face of the skipper. "I gueth thomething ith going to happen," she observed.

"Don't tell the others," cautioned Harriet, with a warning shake of the head.

"I don't intend to. What ith it, a thtorm?"

Harriet nodded.

"I knew it. I jutht knew thomething wath going to break loothe."

The purple haze was nearing at a rapid rate of speed, and Harriet Burrell saw that with it the sea was piling up, its white crests angry and menacing.

"Try to keep the wind dead astern," ordered

the skipper. "I will handle the sheets. Do you think you can manage it?"

"Yes, sir. I will be on the lookout for orders. You may depend upon me, sir."

"Then we'll weather it, but we shall get pretty wet, and night is coming on, too. We're going to have a merry night of it! All hands who do not wish to get a ducking go below," shouted the skipper.

Miss Elting, Jane, Harriet and Tommy remained outside. The captain tossed a rope to each, directing them to tie the ropes about their waists, making the lines fast to a cleat on the after end of the raised deck cabin.

"Just for safety's sake," he nodded.

The wind was beginning to whistle through the rigging, the water to foam under the bows of the "Sister Sue," showing that she was getting under good headway.

"Port one point," bellowed the skipper. Harriet instantly obeyed the command. Then the gale was upon them with a screech and a roar. A volume of water that threatened to swamp them rolled toward the stern, but before it had done so Harriet, acting upon a sharply uttered command, had swung the sloop about until its nose met the oncoming rush of wind and water. She gasped for breath as the flood of salt water enveloped her; yet, bracing her feet, clung firmly

to the wheel, holding the craft on the new course. Afterward Harriet had a faint recollection of having seen her companions swimming on the green sea in the little cockpit, Tommy's pale face standing out more prominently than all the rest.

"We made it," roared the skipper. "Now hold her steady, and she will ride it out like a duck." He grabbed up a pail and began bailing with all his might. Jane did likewise, then Miss Elting lent her assistance. Tommy was clinging to the cabin roof with all her might.

Before the storm struck them they had not thought to light their masthead and side lights. Now it was next to impossible to do so. The sloop was rushing through the seas without a light to mark her presence on the sea that was growing more wild with the moments. But the binnacle light was burning steadily over the compass, so that the helmswoman was able to see in which direction they were heading. The compass told her that, instead of making headway toward land, they were rushing along at a frightful rate of speed toward Europe. Still, she realized that this was the only safe course to follow.

All at once Harriet Burrell uttered a sharp cry of alarm. She threw the wheel over so suddenly that a wave smashing against the side of

the sloop nearly turned them turtle. Captain Billy, with quick instinct, let go the mainsail, which swung out far to leeward, thus saving the little craft from being upset. Up to this moment he did not know what the sudden shifting meant, but just as he was about to bellow to the helmswoman he caught sight of a towering mass of lights that for the moment seemed to hang over them, then flashed on, missing the "Sue" by a few scant rods of water. They had had a narrow escape from being run down by a steamer. But for Harriet's quickness, nothing could have saved them. It was plain that those on the bridge of the steamer had not discovered the small boat in the sea under their bows, for they did not even hail.

"Good work," bellowed the skipper.

"I thought we'd got to Europe," shouted Tommy.

"Lay her to. I've got to close reef that sail," commanded the captain.

Harriet pointed the bow right into the teeth of the wind. Oh, how that little craft did plunge! At times it seemed as if the greater part of her length were wholly out of water, that she had taken a long, quivering leap from the crest of one great wave to another. So hard was she pitching that she had little time left in which to roll. Salt spray rained down over the

decks until the cabin itself was almost wholly hidden from the view of the girl at the wheel. In the meantime the captain had reefed the mainsail down to the last row.

"Now let her off a few points," he directed.

Boom!

"Oh, what was that?" cried Miss Elting, her voice barely heard in the shriek of the gale. "What happened?"

"Jib gone by the board," shouted the captain. "Lucky if we don't lose the mainsail the same way."

Harriet had not uttered a sound when the startling report had boomed out above the roar of the storm, but her heart had seemed to leap into her throat. Her arms had grown numb under the strain of holding the wheel, for the sea was hurling its tremendous force against the craft, requiring great effort on the part of the helmswoman to keep the boat on its course. But she clung doggedly to her chosen task, seeking to pierce the darkness ahead with her gaze. The salt water made her eyes smart so that she could scarcely see at all. Yet she could feel the wind on her face, and by that guide alone she was enabled to keep the "Sue" headed into the storm. She long since had ceased trying to keep the boat on a compass course, for the greater part of the time the compass card was invisible

either through the spray or solid water, as the case might be.

It was marvelous how the little boat stood up under the bombardment of the Atlantic rollers and the mountains of water that hurled themselves upon her. Harriet was standing in water up to her knees, but, fortunately, every time the boat rolled or plunged, a volume of salt water was hurled out into the sea itself.

In the cabin everything movable was afloat. The passengers in there were nearly drowned at times, but in their fright most of them had forgotten their seasickness. They were clinging to the seats in most instances, screaming with fear. Miss Elting, deciding that her presence was needed in the cabin rather than outside, plunged into the dark hole head-first. Quickly gathering herself together, she did her best to calm and comfort the girls, though every plunge of the boat she expected would be its last. It did not seem possible that the little craft could weather the gale.

Suddenly there came a mighty crash above their heads, followed by a ripping, tearing sound, and above it all sounded the screams of the girls who were fighting their great battle out there in the cockpit of the "Sister Sue."

The girls in the cabin threw themselves into one another's arms, screaming wildly.

"Stop it!" shouted Miss Elting. "Be brave, girls. Remember, you are Camp Girls!"

The cabin doors burst in and a great green wave hurled them the length of the cabin, crushing them against the bulkhead at the far end, the guardian clinging, gasping, nearly drowned, to a rail above the doorway.

CHAPTER XXIII

WAGING A DESPERATE BATTLE

"WE'RE lost!" exclaimed Miss Elting, turning back into the cabin. But she was suddenly attracted by a shout from without.

"Cut away!" screamed Harriet. "Jane, are you there? Tommy!"

"He's gone!" It was Jane's voice that answered in a long, wailing cry.

The water was rapidly receding from the cabin. Miss Elting quickly straightened the girls out. She did not know how seriously they had been hurt, if at all, but after making sure that all within the cabin were alive, the guardian groped her way to the cockpit. Harriet stood braced against the wheel, shouting out her commands, screaming at the top of her voice to make herself heard and understood above the gale.

The guardian staggered over to her.

"Oh, what has happened?" she cried.

"The mast has gone overboard—part of it at least, and——"

"Captain Billy's gone, too! The boom struck and carried him over!" yelled Jane when she had crept near enough to be heard.

"Cut away, I tell you. Here is a hatchet." Harriet had groped in the locker, from which she drew a keen-edged hatchet and handed it to Crazy Jane McCarthy. "You'll have to be quick. We're being swamped. See, we are taking water over the side. Oh, *do* hurry, Jane!"

"The captain gone!" moaned Miss Elting. "Can nothing be done?"

"No." Harriet's voice was firm. "Unless we work fast we shall all go to the bottom. We must save those on the boat, Miss Elting. But you listen for his voice. Oh, this is terrible!"

The steady whack—whack of the hatchet in the hands of Jane McCarthy came faintly to their ears. Once Jane slipped over the side into the water; but, grasping the life-line to which she was tied, the girl pulled herself back on the deck and set pluckily to work again. It was the wonder of Harriet Burrell that the "Sue" kept afloat at all, for she was more under water than above it, and the seas were breaking over her.

"Please get back and look after the girls.

Where is your life-line?'' asked Harriet of Miss Elting.

''I threw it off when I went into the cabin.''

''Get back! Stay there until I call you, or——''

Harriet did not finish the sentence, but the guardian understood and turned back into the cabin, where she did her best to comfort the panic-stricken Camp Girls.

''Whoop!'' shrieked Jane.

The ''Sue'' righted with a violent jolt. Jane had freed the side of the boat of the rigging which, attached to the broken mast and sail, was holding the craft down and threatening every second to swamp her. Jane crept down into the cockpit, and was about to cut away the stays that held the wreckage, which was now floating astern of the sloop.

''Stop!'' commanded Harriet. ''Wait till we see what effect it has on us, but stand by to cut away if we see there is peril. Oh, I hope we shall be able to ride it out. That poor captain! He must have been stunned by a blow of the boom. It seems cruel to stand here without lifting a hand to save him. But what can we do? Jane, is there anything you can think of that we can do?''

Crazy Jane shook her head slowly.

''Nothing but to tell his family, if we ever get

back to land," was her solemn reply. "But, darlin', we aren't on land ourselves yet, and I doubt me very much if we ever shall be. See the waves breaking over this old tub. How long do you think she will stand it?"

Harriet did not answer at once. She was peering forward into the darkness. Holding up her hand, she noted the direction of the wind.

"Do you see, Jane, the 'Sue' is behaving better? She isn't taking nearly so much water. Do you know what has happened?"

"What is it, darlin'?"

"The wreckage that you cut away is holding the stern and acting as a sea anchor, and it has pulled the bow of the boat around until we are headed right into the gale. I am glad I didn't let you cut loose the wreckage. It may be the very thing that will save us, but I don't know. I wish you would get some one to help you bail out the pit. The water is getting deep in here again, and the cabin is all afloat."

"But more will come in," objected Jane.

"And more will swamp us, first thing we know. You take the wheel. I will bail."

"I'll do it myself, darlin'."

Jane asked Hazel to assist her, and together they slaved until it seemed as if their backs surely would break.

The storm, while not abating any, did not ap-

pear to increase in fury. It was severe enough as it was. The seas loomed above the broken craft like huge, black mountains, yet somehow they seemed to break just a few seconds before engulfing her and to divide, passing on either side, but the "Sister Sue" wallowed in a smother of foam, creaking and groaning, giving in every joint, and threatening to fall to pieces with each new twist and turn forced upon her by the writhing seas.

Miss Elting, after having in a measure quieted the girls in the cabin, came out clinging to a rope. She and Harriet held a shouted conversation, after which the guardian returned to the cabin, where there was less danger of being beaten down by huge seas, although one could get fully as wet inside the cabin as on deck.

The hours of the night wore slowly away. The intense impenetrable blackness, the roar and thunder of the sea, the terrible jerking, jolting and hurling beneath them, shook the nerves of the girls, keeping them constantly in a half-dazed condition that perhaps lessened the keenness of their suffering. Harriet and Jane, however, never for a single second relaxed their vigilance, or left a single thing undone that would tend to ease the boat or to contribute to its safety. The binnacle light long since had been extinguished by the water, making it impossible

to see the compass to tell which way they were headed. Little good it would have done them to know, either, they being powerless to change their course, or to make any headway at all, save as they drifted with the seas. Harriet hoped they might be drifting toward shore. Instead, they were being slowly carried down the coast and parallel with it.

At last the gray of the early dawn appeared in the east, but it was a "high dawn," with the light first appearing high in the sky, meaning to sailors wind or storm. Harriet did not know the meaning of it, however, though she thought it a most peculiar looking sky. And now, as the light came slowly, they were able to get an idea what the sea in which they had been wallowing all night looked like. It was a fearsome sight. As they gazed their hearts sank within them. Mountains of leaden water rose into the air, then sank out of sight again, and when the "Sue" went into one of those troughs of the sea it was like sinking into a great black pit from which there was no escape. Yet the buoyant hull of the sloop rose every time, shaking the water from her glistening white sides and bending to the oncoming seas preparatory to taking another dizzy dive.

The lower half of the mast was still standing, a ragged stump, the deck itself swept clean of

every vestige of wreckage and movable equipment. What troubled Harriet most was the loss of the water cask. The small water tank in the cabin had been hurled to the floor by the pitching of the sloop and its contents spilled. The Meadow-Brook Girl saw that they were going to be without water to drink, a most serious thing, provided they were not drowned before needing something to drink. As she studied the boat, an idea was gradually formed in her mind, a plan outlined that she determined to try to adopt were the wind to go down sufficiently to make the attempt prudent. Harriet called the others to her, and the girls talked it over in all its details for the better part of an hour.

There was nothing to eat on board now, nor did many of the party feel like eating. Tommy, however, found her appetite shortly after daybreak and raised quite a disturbance because there was nothing to be had. She suggested breaking open the doors that led to the chain locker, but of this Harriet would not hear. She did not wish water to get in there, for that appeared to be the one part of the boat that was now free from it, and that really had saved them from going to the bottom. In the meantime the wind did not appear to be abating in the slightest. All that wretched forenoon the majority of the girls, half-dead from fright and exposure,

clung desperately to the cushions of the locker seats, wild-eyed and despairing. All that forenoon Harriet Burrell, Jane McCarthy, Tommy, Hazel and Miss Elting stuck to their posts and worked without once pausing to rest. About noon the wind suddenly died out, then began veering in puffs from various quarters of the compass.

"Now, Jane, is our chance," cried Harriet. "The storm is broken, but the seas will be high all the rest of the day. If we can fix up some sort of a sail, we may be able to reach land before long."

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

WHEN the "Sister Sue" failed to return the previous afternoon, and the storm came on, Mrs. Livingston, greatly alarmed, sent a party of girls with a guardian to the nearest telephone to send word to Portsmouth that the sloop and its passengers were missing. A revenue cutter was sent out to look for them, first, however, having been in communication with the ocean liner the girls had passed by wireless, learning from the captain of the ship of their having sighted the "Sister

Sue" and giving the latter's position at the time. This served as a guide for the revenue boat, which steamed through the great seas until daylight.

There were no signs of the missing sloop; but, reasoning that, if the boat was still afloat, it must have been blown down the coast, the revenue boat headed in that direction. It was not until three o'clock in the afternoon, however, that the lookout reported seeing something floating in the far distance, off the starboard bow. A study of this object through the glasses led the captain to turn his cutter in that direction. An hour later he was close enough to see that it was a dismantled boat, and that there were people aboard it.

Full speed ahead was ordered and the revenue boat rapidly drew up. A strange spectacle was revealed to the officers and men of the revenue cutter as she approached close enough to make out details. The dismantled sloop was lying very low in the water, showing that she was in a bad way. To the top of the stump of the mast a staple had been driven and through this a rope run. This rope held a jib, the greater part of which was on the deck because there was not height enough to spread it all. But what there was of the jib was pulling well in the fresh breeze and the sloop was wallowing through the

seas, making fair headway toward land, which now was not more than fifteen miles away.

Harriet Burrell, still at the wheel, was giving her full attention to handling the boat, leaving to her companions the task of attracting the attention of the cutter, which, however, had seen the sloop long before the passengers on her had discovered the revenue boat.

The captain of the cutter lay to as close to the sloop as he dared go, then held a megaphone conversation with the survivors. Harriet replied that she thought she would be able to get the boat to shore, but suggested that they take off the other girls. The captain would not listen to Harriet's first proposition. After a perilous passage he finally succeeded in getting a boat's crew aboard the sloop, the skipper himself accompanying the rescue party.

"And you brought this tub through the gale?" he questioned, turning to Harriet after hearing a brief account of the loss of Captain Billy and the consequent experiences of the "Sister Sue's" passengers.

"It was purely good luck, sir," answered Harriet modestly.

"It was something a great deal stronger than luck," answered the captain. "The sea is going down. As soon as it is down enough to be safe I will put you all aboard the cutter."

"Are you going to leave the sloop?" asked Miss Elting.

"No. We want that boat for reasons of our own. We wish to look it over at our leisure. Your sea anchor saved you, that and good seamanship. Miss Burrell, it is a pity you are not a man. You would be commanding a ship in a few years. I think we had better transfer you now. I'm afraid of the sloop."

The transfer was a thrilling experience for the Camp Girls. Several times they narrowly missed being upset and thrown into the sea, but after more than two hours' work every one had been safely landed on the deck of the revenue boat. Three men were put aboard the sloop, a lifeboat being left with them in case the "Sue" foundered. The revenue cutter then started towing her toward home. It was late in the evening when finally they came to anchor off Camp Wau-Wau. The surf was running so high that it was decided not to put the girls ashore until the following morning, though the "Sue" was cast off from her tow and allowed to drift into the bay. From here her crew rowed ashore and informed the anxious Camp Girls that every one of their companions was safe.

But the morning brought with it a further surprise. The cabin in which the Meadow-Brook Girls had made their home had wholly disap-

peared. With it had gone the bar, swept out by the storm, the cabin lying a hopeless, tangled wreck on the shore of the bay. With it, too, had gone ashore a variety of stuff which the officers of the revenue boat examined early that morning. They pronounced the ruined stuff ammunition.

Harriet told of the mysterious box that she had seen carried into the woods. Later in the day this was located and dug up. It was found to be a zinc-lined case, packed with military rifles of old pattern.

On board the "Sister Sue," in the chain locker, was found a complete wireless equipment, together with quite a cargo of rifles and ammunition.

"These guns were meant for *business!*" remarked the captain of the revenue cutter, as he and another officer stood by superintending the work of four sailors.

"Why, I thought the days of piracy had gone by," remarked Harriet.

"*Pi*——" gasped Tommy, and turned pale.

"Pirates!" echoed Margery Brown in consternation. "Why, we might have been killed and no one would have known what became of us!"

"Who said anything about pirates?" retorted the revenue captain, smiling.

"Why, you thaid——" began Tommy wonderingly.

"I spoke of 'business,'" came the answer of the man in uniform, "and that was what I meant to say. In these days, in Latin-American countries, revolution appears to be one of the leading forms of business."

"*Revolution?*" echoed Margery, quickly reviving, while Tommy listened in amazement. "Why, revolutions are romantic; there's nothing awful about 'em."

"Nothing awful," laughed Captain Rupert. "In the countries to the south of us most of the revolutions are very tame affairs, so far as actual fighting goes. The crowd that makes the most noise, whether government or insurgent, usually wins the day. For that matter, I never could understand why blank cartridges wouldn't do as well as the real ammunition in these Latin-American revolutions."

"Yet if these rifles and cartridges were intended for use in a revolution," Harriet broke in, "doesn't it seem odd to land them on this short strip of New Hampshire coast?"

"Not at all odd when you understand the reason," Captain Rupert went on. "These rifles are intended to be used in another projected uprising of the blacks in Cuba. The blacks there are always ready to fight, provided some self-

seeking white man offers them the weapons, and a prosperous time, without work, in the event of victory. Such another uprising of the blacks in Cuba has been planned. The secret service men of the Cuban government got wind of the affair and trailed some of the plotters to this country.

"Now, the United States is the place where nearly all of the supplies for these revolutions are bought. So our government, watching, discovered that the arms were being slyly shipped to Portsmouth, instead of being directly shipped from New York to Cuba. It was, of course, quite plain that Portsmouth was the port from which the arms and ammunition were to be shipped. So the cutter that I command was ordered to Portsmouth. As soon as the plotters there found the 'Terrapin' cruising off that port they knew they must find some other way of getting the goods out of the country, for it is against the law to ship arms from this country for use against any other established government.

"So the plotters hit upon a new plan. They engaged the skipper of a regular fishing smack to carry small lots of arms out to sea, there to transfer them to a sloop. Captain Billy was the man selected to receive the arms and ammunition at sea. He brought them in here, hiding them, with the intention of putting out some dark night, making several short trips, and

transferring all the rifles and cartridges—eight thousand rifles and three million cartridges, to a small steamer that would be waiting in the offing. The steam vessel would then carry the cargo to Cuba, landing the goods at some secret, appointed place. Captain Billy, as our government learned, was to receive one thousand dollars for his share in the work. It was a bit risky, as he faced prison if caught—as he surely would have been imprisoned had he lived."

"Poor man!" sighed Harriet sympathetically.

"I agree with you," nodded Captain Rupert gravely. "Captain Billy was a good fellow, as men go; but he had passed his fiftieth year with fortune as far away as ever, and he caught at the bait of a thousand dollars, though he knew he was breaking the laws of his country. But he's dead," added the revenue officer, uncovering his head for a moment; "therefore we won't discuss his fault further."

When the "hidden treasure" in the woods was unearthed it proved to be a large consignment of rifles and cartridges. These had been hidden in a cleverly concealed artificial, sod-covered cave in the woods. Its existence had been so well hidden that Camp Wau-Wau girls had scores of times passed over the cave without suspecting its existence.

Before the revenue cutter sailed away the six officers aboard came ashore one evening, taking dinner with the girls, in company with a number of young men, invited from the neighborhood. Afterward until half-past ten o'clock there was a pleasant dance.

All too soon Harriet Burrell and her friends found this vacation trip at an end. Proud of the honors they had won, delighted beyond words with the good times they had had, they left for home the day before the hulk of the "Sister Sue" was taken away, at Mr. McCarthy's order, and sold.

"We are leaving behind us the best time we have ever had," sighed Hazel on the morning of their departure.

"I am sure there are plenty of good times ahead of all of us yet," declared Harriet brightly.

"What I'm going to say, girls," broke in Miss Elting, "is not original, but practical. The driver we've engaged to take our belongings to the station will be due here in ten minutes. If we're not ready for him, he'll charge us extra for waiting."

So the packing was finished, the driver departed with the luggage, and the Meadow-Brook Girls, somewhat wet-eyed, took leave of all at Camp Wau-Wau. Then, Torch Bearer Harriet

Burrell leading the way, the four girls and their guardian took the trail.

Yet there was another good time coming, as all our readers will speedily discover when they open the next volume, which is published under the title: "The Meadow-Brook Girls on the Tennis Courts; Or, Winning Out in the Big Tournament."

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